

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	De La Salle College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Castleblayney Road Dundalk Co. Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63891T

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 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, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

At the time of the evaluation the school did not meet the requirements in relation to check number 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However since the evaluation, school management has submitted evidence that the school is now fully compliant.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	23-09-2019 – 25-09-2019
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 • Meeting with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students’ work • Interaction with students • Feedback to the senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

De la Salle College is a voluntary Catholic secondary school that caters mainly for boys, but female students are accepted into its repeat Leaving Certificate class. At the time of the evaluation 657 students were enrolled. The school is under the patronage of Le Chéile Schools Trust. A broad range of programmes is offered: the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good; areas such as strategic planning and policy development require attention.
- The school has fostered a positive climate, characterised by respectful relationships, high expectations for achievement and care for students’ wellbeing.
- A broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes is provided; the provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at senior cycle is less than satisfactory, while some of the additional teaching resources for special educational needs (SEN) are being used to sustain curricular choice for students.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good, with very good practice evident in some lessons; areas for development included in-class assessment and better student engagement in lessons.
- Very good progress has been made in relation to the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.
- While the school’s capacity for improvement is very good, there is a need to further develop and streamline its formal SSE process.

Recommendations

- School management should ensure that all year groups receive the appropriate provision of RSE, as set out in Department Circular 0037/2010.
- The deployment of teaching resources for SEN should be reviewed to align fully with the principles of the revised resource allocation model, as outlined in circular letter 0014/2017.
- The board of management, in collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders, should develop an overarching strategic plan for the future development of the school.
- Teachers should further develop the range of formative assessment practices in lessons in order to enable students to reflect on and improve the quality of their work.

- School management should oversee the development of a robust SSE process, including the development of a core team and the setting of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed (SMART) targets, as an integral part of the school strategic plan.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good; areas such as strategic planning, policy development and some aspects of curricular provision require attention.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership of teaching and learning is good. School management strives to provide a high-quality education in an inclusive environment that values diversity and promotes mutual respect. Management and staff have high expectations for their students. There is a positive culture of professional learning among staff, and this is actively facilitated by school management. Teachers are accessing training for the Junior Cycle subject specifications and this is impacting positively on the quality of learner experiences.

The school's recent review of middle-management posts and its school self-evaluation (SSE) process demonstrate a renewed focus on encouraging teachers to develop and extend their teaching, learning and assessment practices. A teaching and learning team has recently been established to facilitate a sustainable and strategic approach to developing classroom practice, including initiatives in e-learning. The school is commended for regularly facilitating placements for a number of Professional Master of Education (PME) students. Three teachers have also trained for Droichead, a process that supports the professional learning of newly qualified teachers during the induction phase.

School management fosters students' holistic development by providing a very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. The range of subject options available at both junior cycle and senior cycle is very broad and includes three modern foreign languages. At senior cycle Politics and Society is already an option. Physical Education will be offered as a Leaving Certificate examination subject next year.

The Transition Year programme has grown in popularity in recent years and offers a wide range of valuable activities and learner experiences. It is commendable that TY students get an opportunity to sample modules in senior-cycle subjects during the year; this assists them to make more informed decisions about subject options later. School surveys of students and parents demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the TY programme. However, some parents expressed a preference for work experience to be scheduled over a two-week block, rather than on one specific day every week. Some teachers queried whether every student was participating in the work experience. It is recommended that arrangements for the oversight of the work placements be enhanced.

Participation in the TY programme attracts a significant once-off charge that covers all activities for the year. While school management reported that the school offers waivers in this regard, the fee may appear prohibitive for some families. It is recommended that this charge be kept under review in order to ensure that access to the programme is affordable to all.

Commendably the school provides a well-planned and well-coordinated Leaving Certificate Applied programme. During the evaluation, LCA students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the operation of the programme in the school.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), incorporating RSE, is appropriately timetabled at junior cycle. An additional period of Life Skills, incorporating four distinct modules, has also been timetabled for students in first and second year to support Wellbeing. Currently the teachers of the life skills programme do not formally meet. It is recommended that a subject coordinator be appointed to oversee the life skills programme and convene regular meetings of the team.

At the time of the evaluation the provision of RSE at senior cycle was less than satisfactory and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Currently TY students participate in the Manuela programme, but students would also benefit from additional elements of a broader RSE programme. During the evaluation, it was evident that there were considerable gaps and inconsistencies in the provision of RSE to students in fifth and sixth year, including LCA. It is recommended that school management ensure that all year groups receive the appropriate RSE provision, as set out in Department Circular 0037/2010.

There are good supports in place for students with SEN. The SEN department is overseen by a newly-appointed and appropriately-trained coordinator who has already identified areas for further development. Many student support files are in place and work is progressing well on the remainder. The students benefit from the support of ten teachers and six special-needs assistants (SNAs). However, the majority of the teachers deployed to SEN have no specialist training in the area. It is recommended that school management facilitates additional continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for the teachers involved.

As the SEN team is large, very few formal meetings of the entire team are scheduled during the year. A greater level of collaborative planning is required to ensure that the interventions provided are sufficiently aligned to individual students' needs. Students with SEN regularly receive support from a number of different teachers during the school week. Timetabling arrangements should ensure greater continuity and consistency of support for students.

At the time of the evaluation, the deployment of a third of the hours allocated for SEN were being used to sustain curricular choice for students or were not yet assigned. Circular 0014/2017 states that the additional SEN teaching hours should be used in their entirety to support students identified with SEN, learning support or EAL support needs.

It is recommended that the deployment of teaching resources for SEN be reviewed to align fully with the principles of the revised resource allocation model, as outlined in circular letter 0070/2017 and the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools, Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools*.

The quality of care for students is very good. Effective pastoral care structures are in place to support students, and these include form teachers, year heads, student mentors and prefects, as well as a student support team that meets weekly. Incoming first-year students benefit from a comprehensive induction programme, and very good links have been established with parents and feeder schools to ensure a smooth transition for students who are transferring from primary into post-primary school.

Provision for guidance counselling is very good and the school benefits from the services of three fully-qualified school guidance counsellors, one of whom is full-time and two part-time. Classroom guidance is appropriately timetabled at senior cycle, while commendably, modules in Guidance are also provided at junior cycle. Questionnaire responses indicate that the majority of students feel safe and well cared for in the school.

Managing the organisation

Members of the board of management demonstrate a highly commendable level of expertise and experience, as well as a great sense of loyalty and commitment to the school. The board meets regularly and maintains comprehensive records of all meetings. Responses to questionnaires

indicate that both staff and parents would welcome more information on the operation of the board. Consideration should be given to issuing an agreed report.

All mandatory policies are in place, but some of them are outdated. It is commendable that the code of behaviour, the child safeguarding statement, the health and safety policy and the school's anti-bullying policy have recently been reviewed and updated. The board has already identified the need to review its admissions policy. It is recommended that the board establishes a systematic review of all school policies.

The principal and deputy principal manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. As a team they foster a positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community. Teachers are deployed with a view to making good use of their specific strengths and skills. In their responses to questionnaires, the vast majority of parents and staff agreed that the school is well run.

The senior management team develops a strong culture of mutual trust, respect and shared accountability. They adopt a facilitative style of leadership and an open-door approach to staff, parents and students.

Responses from questionnaires indicate that there is scope to enhance communication and consultation within the school community. The school is a very busy place and not all teachers agree that their views are valued in the decision-making processes. It is recommended that school management and staff together explore how procedures in relation to internal communication and consultation can be further enhanced.

The board maintains the buildings, sports fields and grounds to a very high standard. Plans are at an advanced stage for the construction of a school extension that will accommodate two autism disorder spectrum (ASD) classes. Electrical and fire safety works have recently been carried out as part of the summer works scheme. Fire drills have not been conducted for some time in the school. It is recommended that evacuation procedures be conducted on a more regular basis.

Leading school development

School management has developed a school plan, but the section on whole-school strategic planning requires further development. The plan identifies two key priorities for development – increased enrolments and the establishment of ASD classes. Other priorities, already identified as part of the ongoing school self-evaluation (SSE) process, are not referenced. It is recommended that the board, in collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders, develop an overarching strategic plan for the future development of the school.

The principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain very constructive relationships with parents. In their response to questionnaires, parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

The parents' association plays a key role in supporting the school and providing additional resources, including new books for the school library. They organise a series of worthwhile talks on adolescent issues and they engage in the review and redrafting of school policies.

Developing leadership capacity

It is positive that the middle-management structures have recently been reviewed. The duties attached to many of the posts have been revised to include clear roles integral to the administration, management and leadership of the school. These leadership roles are considered at all times as serving the school's core work: learning and teaching.

Teachers have taken on additional responsibilities and are very committed to providing a wide range of activities that provide for and support a wide educational experience for students.

Student leadership is fostered through the Student Council and the La Sallian prefect and mentoring structures. Students are encouraged to lead and participate in many initiatives. They are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to attend parent/teacher meetings.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good, with very good practice evident in some lessons. The quality of assessment in the lessons visited was satisfactory. In most of the lessons observed there was scope to extend in-class assessment strategies and create better opportunities for student engagement, in order to provide for more effective learner outcomes and experiences.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In almost all of the lessons observed students' enjoyment of learning was evident. In their questionnaire responses the vast majority of students agreed that they were getting on well with their school work.

Clearly established classroom routines were evident in all lessons observed. The learning intentions were shared with students and successfully consolidated at the end of most lessons. Learning was most successful when the topics explored built on prior learning and were made relevant to real life and student experiences. In the most effective lessons students were enabled to make meaningful connections with other subjects and apply their learning to life outside of the classroom. Further use of this approach is recommended.

Confident use of subject-specific terminology by students was evident in many lessons. In language lessons, there was effective use of the target language by both students and teachers.

Students were able to work both independently and collaboratively on lesson tasks. Effective group and pair work was facilitated in many, but not all, lessons. In a small number of lessons observed there was an over emphasis on teacher-led activities and students' learning experiences were passive. It is recommended that teachers seek to achieve the appropriate balance between teacher exposition and student activity in order to further enhance learner experiences and outcomes for all.

Interactions between students and teachers were very respectful and students responded very well when classroom strategies enabled them to take responsibility for their learning. Students demonstrated confidence in expressing themselves and in asking and answering questions of a high quality. Learning was particularly effective when the teachers moved around the room, assessing students' progress and supporting them individually.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Good quality planning was noted in the majority of lessons. Additional resources were used effectively to support learning and these included digital presentations, short video clips, mini white boards and work sheets.

Information and communications technology (ICT) was used regularly during lessons, but often it was limited to presenting information on digital slides. ICT was used more creatively in a minority of lessons. In one lesson visited, students carried out their own research on line and projected their findings onto the classroom's white board. In another lesson observed, very effective use was made of split-screen technology which enabled students to view simultaneously a video clip and real-time comprehension questions. Such strategies helped to improve student interest, enjoyment and

engagement in class. In line with the school's current SSE focus on developing e-learning, it is recommended that teachers explore and extend the more creative and effective use of ICT in supporting student learning.

The quality of in-class assessment was satisfactory overall. Teachers assessed learning mainly through observation and oral questioning. The quality of teacher questioning was seen to be most effective when the questions were of a higher order and challenged students to develop skills of application and evaluation of information. Some very good examples of peer assessment were noted, but there was considerable scope to extend this practice across the school.

There was a limited range of formative assessment practice noted in the majority of lessons. Some very good examples of students receiving oral formative feedback were observed in a small number of lessons. Some very good written formative feedback was apparent in some students' copybooks; however this was in a minority of instances. The very good practice of providing formative feedback should be extended across all lessons.

It is recommended that teachers further develop the range of formative assessment practices in lessons in order to enable students to reflect on and improve the quality of their work.

While the quality of subject planning was good overall, there was significant variation in the quality of planning practices. The quality of subject plans reviewed ranged from fair to very good. Exemplary practice was noted where the units of learning were closely aligned to the Junior Cycle subject specifications and informed by the principles of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

There was evidence of good quality collaborative practice in most subject departments. There is much informal collaboration and sharing of resources among teachers. The availability of a digital platform to share resources is a significant strength. A small number of teachers have engaged in peer observation to date, and there is scope to further extend this worthwhile practice.

All subject plans reviewed contained a record of student attainment in certificate examinations and comparisons with national norms. Many plans included an analysis and reflection on attainment, while a small number included an action plan for further improvement. Planning would benefit from enhanced teacher-reflective practices that lead to the development of action plans identifying short, medium and long-term goals for improvement, in line with the school's SSE strategy on attainment.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Previous evaluations include subject inspections of Mathematics, Art, Home Economics, History, Music and English.

Leadership and Management

Very good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations, including updating the health and safety policy and addressing timetabling issues.

Teaching and Learning

Very good progress has been made in most areas, including subject department planning and developing classroom practice. While recommendations in relation to formative assessment have been implemented in the subject areas previously inspected, there is a need for this good practice to be further extended across all departments.

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

While the school's capacity for improvement is very good, there is scope to further develop and streamline its formal SSE process.

The School's Self-Evaluation (SSE) Process

It is commendable that a SSE co-ordinator has been appointed from the start of this current academic year. Eight staff teams have recently been established, each to develop a key area which has been identified. These areas include curriculum, e-learning, assessment and attendance. The range of focus areas is broad and ambitious, and would benefit from refinement, as part of an integrated learning and teaching action plan.

The SSE process would benefit from establishing a SSE core team, comprising a representative of each of the committees, who would assist in refining these areas, identify a small number of key priorities to focus on each year and a time frame for implementation. It would be important that all involved follow the six-step SSE process. Data acquired through the WSE-MLL questionnaires could be used as an additional evidence base.

Progress has been made in recent years in developing practice in relation to literacy, numeracy and Wellbeing. However, the process focused mainly on developing classroom strategies which were not aligned to specific and measurable targets for improvement. It is recommended that school management oversees the development of a robust SSE process, including the setting of SMART targets. All of these initiatives should be streamlined into a coherent learning and teaching action plan for inclusion in a whole-school strategic plan.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has very good capacity for improvement. The enhanced role of the middle management team and the SSE process will further assist school management in leading strategic planning and development. Overall the staff demonstrate a high level of commitment and enthusiasm in the drive for ongoing school improvement.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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 welcomes this very positive WSE-MLL report that reflects the school's Mission statement to provide a quality human and Christian education for students in an environment of inclusion and mutual respect. Recognition is given to the high expectations set and the hard work done in the school by the staff, students and management working in partnership together with parental support.

The Board is very pleased to see affirmation that "School management fosters students' holistic development by providing a very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities" including the very broad range of subjects offered at junior and senior cycle, the good supports provided for SEN students, and high levels of satisfaction from parents and students with the Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied programmes.

The Board appreciates that the inspectors judged that the quality of care for students is very good and that effective pastoral care structures are in place to support students. The report also commends the level of guidance provision, the comprehensive induction programme for incoming first years, and the very good links that have been established with parents and feeder schools to ensure a smooth transition into post-primary school.

The Board noted with satisfaction that the report commends the opportunities provided for students by teachers who take on additional responsibilities and who are very committed to offering a broad range of activities that support a holistic educational experience for students. "Student leadership is fostered through the Student Council and the Lasallian prefect and mentoring structures."

The Board welcomes recognition of the work done by the Principal and Deputy Principal in fostering a positive school climate and encouraging respectful interactions at all levels within the school community with "an open-door approach to staff, parents and students." The expertise, experience and commitment of the Board are appreciated in the report and the very good condition of the school is noted. Parental satisfaction and involvement are also recognised: "The Principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain very constructive relationships with parents." Parents surveyed expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

There is also very positive affirmation of classroom practice, student experience and teacher collaboration: "The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good, with very good practice evident in some lessons." Interactions between students and teachers were observed to be very respectful and "Students demonstrated confidence in expressing themselves and in asking and answering questions of a high quality." The inspectors noted evidence of quality collaborative practice among teachers and that the availability of a digital platform is a significant strength.

The Board also welcomes recognition of the progress made in relation to recently revised middle-management structures, school self-evaluation and the capacity for school improvement. The report notes that very good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations and the Board looks forward to continuing this practice into the future.

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;