

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| School name | Loreto Secondary School |
| School address | St Michaels Navan Co Meath |
| Roll number | 64370T |

Date of Evaluation: 15-01-2020



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, Stay Safe and RSE).
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

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| Dates of inspection | 13/14/15-01-2020 |
| 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 questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning in 27 lessons• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers |

School context

Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's, Navan is a voluntary Catholic secondary school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 806 girls. The school provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of school leadership and management is good and very positive relationships exist across the school community; there are some shortfalls in strategic planning.
- The recently appointed senior management team is committed to leading further development of teaching and learning and the school is well run.
- There are effective care structures in place; some opportunities exist to develop areas of provision that support student wellbeing and students with additional needs.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; in a significant minority of lessons overly teacher-led approaches impacted on students' levels of active engagement and planning for the diversity of learner needs was not always evident.
- The school has good capacity for improvement; the board is highly supportive of the school and the senior management team is committed to consulting with and working with the stakeholders to further develop the school.
- There are some valuable mechanisms in place to support student voice although aspects of the promotion of student voice in the classroom and across the school are not optimal.

Recommendations

- A comprehensive strategic plan to support the changing needs of the school community that identifies priority areas for development, targets and roles and responsibilities should be developed.
- A teaching and learning committee should be formed to support further development of teaching approaches that promote active learning and differentiation in lessons; any training needs identified should be addressed through continuing professional development (CPD) and the collaborative sharing of the effective practices observed.

- Aspects of provision that support students' wellbeing should be reviewed and provision for students with additional needs should be reorganised in line with circular letter 0014/2017.
- A review of the structures in place to promote and facilitate students' voice within lessons and also in the operation of the school should be undertaken and any deficits should be addressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of school leadership for teaching and learning is good.

The board supports the school through its work in policy making and review. There is a high level of expertise amongst its members. There is very good communication between the board and its nominating body The Loreto Trust. The board is informed of relevant aspects of school life through the principal's report primarily, but also through teacher input, and occasionally student input. The board has availed of suitable continuing professional development (CPD) and has good oversight of finances and child protection.

The senior management team has been working together since the end of the last school year and is developing a shared vision for the school. There has been a period of refinement of roles and a focus on establishing positive relationships with the teaching team including the establishment of a well-subscribed group to promote teachers' voice. Senior management recognises the value of leading change through consultation with stakeholders and of strengthening students' voice. In planning to lead change, a teaching and learning committee should be established to identify areas for development, culminating in short, medium and long-term targets that support necessary development to curriculum and innovations in teaching and learning.

Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) requires review and development in order to ensure that it meets the needs of learners effectively. Three teachers with specialist qualifications in the area of SEN coordinate different elements of provision. Notwithstanding the good work carried out by the school's qualified special education teachers, almost half of all teachers are timetabled to provide some special education teaching (SET) to students with identified needs and much of the resulting provision does not skilfully target the identified needs of students with SEN. Additionally, continuity of learning is not optimal as students sometimes have more than one teacher for SET over the week and each teacher provides support in an area of their choice. SEN provision should be structured to ensure that support is meaningfully planned and aligned to students' identified needs.

Apart from withdrawal lessons, support for SEN is provided through cooperative teaching in Mathematics predominantly and through a reading programme for all students in junior cycle. This provision is in need of review as interventions are not sufficiently aligned with students' needs. Good development of student support files was evident, however, there is a need to identify specific learning needs more skilfully in order to meaningfully plan for effective interventions. It is recommended that the school re-examines its use of the continuum of support framework and identifies how students' needs can be met at all levels of the continuum, ensuring optimally inclusive

provision in mainstream lessons for students at the support for all level, and skilful interventions for students with the greatest level of need at other levels of the continuum.

The quality of care provided for students is good. The care team meets weekly to assess the care needs of students and to plan for support interventions. Very good mechanisms are in place to support first year students in their transition from primary school.

Provision for guidance is good. The guidance counsellor provides timetabled lessons and individual appointments to students from fifth to sixth year and supports students at key transition points in their school life. Personal counselling is provided by qualified personnel in line with good practice. Information arising from questionnaires and discussions with parents and students suggests that structures that support students to make appropriate subject choices are not optimal and should be reviewed.

The TY programme is co-ordinated effectively. In recent years the programme has been oversubscribed and is highly valued by all stakeholders. There is an openness to further development of the programme and the potential for expansion of the programme should be investigated. There are opportunities to develop the subject sampling aspect of TY to facilitate students to make more informed decisions for the senior cycle.

At senior cycle, the school offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP); however, only students who do not study a modern foreign language can opt to participate in the programme and consequently, uptake is low. There is significant scope to improve provision and coordination of LCVP by changing the eligibility requirements and by teaching all elements of the syllabus so that the value of LCVP in admissions to third-level courses nationally is understood; this would address any perception that the programme is designed for lower achieving students.

Senior management is aware that there is a need to review current curriculum provision to ensure that students are offered optimal learning opportunities for the careers of the future. The valuable data being collated regarding the progression trends of students should be combined with a survey of the future careers of interest to current students, to provide a data-based profile. The data would reliably inform a review of the curriculum provided by the school, particularly for the purposes of reviewing the senior cycle curriculum and for the development of LCVP.

The year heads and form tutors play a key role in the care of the students. Teachers take their pastoral roles seriously and there is a respectful relationship between staff and students. Positive student behaviour is celebrated and affirmed in various ways. Senior management intends to develop restorative approaches as a key positive behaviour management mechanism.

Each class group has a form tutor who takes the daily roll call each morning. Tuition time for students is marginally below the minimum twenty eight hours set out by the circular letter M29/95 as not all lesson periods are of the minimum forty minutes duration and this should be addressed.

Many aspects of the school's practices within and outside of the classroom are effective in promoting students' wellbeing. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Physical Education (PE) are provided in junior cycle in line with the wellbeing framework. There is scope to develop the school's junior cycle wellbeing programme further to ensure that it is fully responsive to students' needs. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) has been identified as an area for development and senior management is in the process of accessing additional training for teachers. The absence of Physical Education (PE) from the sixth-year timetables should be addressed.

The school is supportive of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The school has engaged with the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and is now using the Droichead programme to mentor NQTs and this is well managed by one of the deputy principals. The impact on developing teacher practice through peer observation was reported as a very positive outcome of the programme to date.

Managing the organisation

The school is effectively managed. At board of management level, meetings are regular and well organised. Minutes are comprehensive and indicate that meetings are organised to reflect the *Looking at our School 2016 (LAOS)* framework. There is however, scope to for a greater emphasis on development of teaching and learning. Agendas include a child protection oversight report, a financial report from the sub-committee and reports from the principal and the parent's association.

The newly formed senior management team has a good level of combined experience and day-to-day management of the school is good. Teachers are highly appreciative of their management style and were extremely positive about aspects such as the quality of communication in the school. The team is aware of the need to progress development in core areas of school life, particularly to ensure that the school's curriculum and the learning outcomes and experiences meet the needs of the students at the school into the future.

Valuable work in areas that support school life is carried out by the in-school management team and other teachers. Greater collaboration between those working on areas for development and better linkage between the various strands of work being carried out is possible. For example, some very useful work in tracking students' attainment is underway, and the resulting data could be used to support developments in teaching and learning generally, for review of curriculum and programmes and for SEN provision.

Professional time is provided to every teacher in the school and the deployment of all teachers is in line with their qualifications, skills, knowledge and interest. There is a need to review the deployment of teachers for special education teaching in order to ensure that provision is in line with the spirit of circular letter 14/2017 and to ensure that students with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of skilful support.

The general management of facilities is good. Teacher-based classrooms predominate and the specialist rooms are well resourced and maintained. A number of areas at the school have been developed to support students' wellbeing, and there are a few examples where students' suggestions have prompted positive developments with regard to the arrangement of facilities. There is scope to consider systems that could be put in place to reduce crowding on narrower corridors.

The board plans to review the school's admission policy and has a good awareness of the importance of the recently enacted Admissions Bill. The review of the policy should prompt the school which is so clearly 'rooted' in their strong tradition of providing holistic education to continue to be 'responsive' and 'relevant' in the face of greater diversity and to reflect the Mary Ward Schools' 'Loreto Compass'.

Leading school development

The board has identified areas for school improvement including further development of information and communications technologies (ICT) at the school, a review of posts and review and

updating of existing policies, where required. Additionally, there is a significant development of the building in process which will result in additional classrooms and facilities. As the school enters into a new phase of growth, the establishment of a strategic plan should reflect the evolving needs of students and focus on key aspects such as curriculum, teaching and learning, diversity, and infrastructure.

More rigorous procedures for identifying training needs are required to build on current capacity for the ongoing development of teaching, learning and assessment. This should be done through engagement with CPD focusing on the identification of needs and by ensuring formalised procedures are in place to optimise the sharing of new learning.

The input and contribution of the parents' association (PA) is welcomed and valued by school management. The PA play an important role in policy review and the school seeks the views of all parents in relation to school self-evaluation (SSE) through conducting surveys. There is good communication with parents which has been further enhanced through the recent introduction of a mobile phone application. A member of senior management attends meetings of the parents' association.

Developing leadership capacity

There is good work underway in relation to developing leadership capacity within the school. The senior management team has established a team to promote teacher voice in decision-making. Leadership opportunities are provided through a number of key teams. The post-holders and programme co-ordinator play key roles in supporting senior management in the running of the school. There is also a good level of volunteerism amongst teachers in supporting activities at the school and in providing additional experiences to the students. Senior management is due to conduct a review of the responsibilities attached to posts and it will be of great benefit to consider carefully how roles and duties can be evolved to best support changes in areas identified for development.

Students are provided with a range of opportunities for leadership through the student council and the systems for class captains and prefects. Senior students play a significant role in supporting junior peers as trained mentors and students have been invited to address the board of management. Sporting and other teams at the school also enable students to fulfil leadership roles. Students have been surveyed on various aspects of school life. However, less than a quarter of the students surveyed as part of this evaluation perceived that their voice impacted on how things are done in the school. The school should reflect upon this perception and should endeavour to address the students' view so that all students feel heard and valued.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good. Highly effective practice was noted in a significant minority of lessons and in a small number of lessons practice was less than optimal.

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of learner experiences was good.

Interactions between students were respectful in all settings and there was good rapport between teachers and their students throughout. In most lessons high expectations were set for students and behaviour was exemplary.

In the majority of lessons, the shared learning intentions served to bring clarity and structure to lessons. In a small number of highly effective lessons, good practice was evident when teachers used the learning intentions to frame the purpose of the lesson effectively and where students were also provided with success criteria enabling them to self-assess and to understand the purpose of and expectations for the learning. Where very good practice was noted, students were referred to the learning intentions at various points of the lesson to check understanding. Further development of the purposeful use of the learning intentions boards in lessons would be beneficial.

In the most successful lessons, students demonstrated high levels of interest and motivation and willingly participated in all activities. In these highly effective lessons, very good development of key skills was evident through well considered collaborative activities. However, there was a need in the majority of lessons to increase the level of student engagement and participation. In less effective lessons, students' contributions and voice were limited by tasks that were teacher-led and overly focussed on textbooks; these lessons did not promote meaningful, deeper learning. Teachers should collectively focus on embedding active learning methodologies across lessons and the very good practices observed in some lessons should be shared.

In highly effective lessons, students experienced a very good balance of challenge and support which enabled them to query and explore, thus experiencing success at various levels. There was scope in the majority of lessons to further scaffold learning for those students who require more support and to extend learning opportunities where appropriate. Teachers should collectively examine how lessons can be planned to include a greater range of methodologies to support diverse learning needs and to differentiate effectively to ensure that all students experience success.

The outcomes and experiences of students with identified learning needs were not optimal and there is a need to review how support for learning needs is provided in both mainstream and support lessons. In one-to-one or small group support lessons, very caring relationships were evident; however, provision was generic and insufficiently planned to address students' individual, specific needs. As part of an overall review of provision, the outcomes and experiences of students with identified learning needs should be a central focus for the general planning of interventions and for teachers' planning. There is a need also to develop teachers' understanding and skills to support diversity.

In general, the learning environment was supportive and conducive to learning. Learning spaces contained good displays of student work and positive messages about learning and wellbeing. While many classrooms had been adapted to accommodate group interactions there was scope for more collaborative activities to promote learner voice. The school should consider ways in which the environment can be utilised in a highly effective way to reflect the voice of the student and celebrate the students' many successes in all areas of school life.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers' individual and collective practice is good. In all lessons, teachers had prepared well for lessons and classroom management was very good.

In some lessons careful planning resulted in highly effective, student-centred practice that engaged each student actively and developed skills incrementally. A key characteristic of these most effective lessons was the use of a variety of methodologies, taking very good cognisance of the range of students' preferred learning styles, which has been an area of focus for teachers and students. There was scope in the majority of lessons for teachers' planning to better reflect the range of needs within lessons. A review of teachers' planning for student-centred learning should be undertaken at a whole-school level.

Collaborative teaching is in place in mathematics lessons although this practice was trialled in other subjects but has yet to become established. In the lessons observed, there was a need to optimise the potential of the significant resource of an additional teacher in the classroom. Careful decision-making, with a very clear rationale based on identified students' needs should underpin such practice. School management should provide CPD to support developments in this area.

Subject department planning is well developed in a number of subjects, and requires considerable work in others. Where departmental planning was optimal, very strong collaborative work had been undertaken. In a small number of subjects, excellent reflection was noted and included action-planning for improvement following analysis of examination results and careful consideration was given to planning for the diverse range of needs within lessons. The very good practices noted in the very high quality plans should be embedded across all subjects.

A focus on assessment forms one of the strands of the school's self-evaluation (SSE) plan. The dominant form of assessment of students' learning in lessons was oral questioning. Best practice was evident when the questions posed enabled students to apply and evaluate information with their peers. A greater use of higher-order questions with appropriate wait time would further develop learner experience. In a small number of lessons, other strategies were well-used, incorporating mini-whiteboards or graphic organisers. Assessment of learning was more evident than assessment for learning generally, especially in the copies examined and this is an area for development generally. Teachers should revisit the area of assessment to ensure that approaches used are optimally supportive of students' learning.

A number of advances have been made at the school including the use of an online platform for the retention of documentation, for sharing of information and to support academic tracking. Additionally, the school has invested in ICT trolleys for use in classrooms. There is good practice in teacher collaboration to develop the use of ICT. In a number of lessons, ICT was used for teacher-designed presentations and to show media clips that supported students' learning well. Across lessons, there was scope for the greater use of ICT as a learning tool. Teachers should continue to develop the use of ICT with a view to supporting the range of learning needs within lessons effectively.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

There has been good progress in implementing some of the recommendations from previous evaluations. There are some key aspects that remain areas for improvement and these should be attended to as a priority, including the significant scope to develop current practice and procedures in relation to inclusion and SET. There continues to be a need to review and develop the LCVP programme. ICT resources are a welcome addition to the school and the development of the reception area, library, study hall and the repurposing of the chapel are all noteworthy developments.

Teaching and Learning

There was evidence of good implementation of recommendations relating to teaching and learning in some lessons, with scope to further develop differentiated approaches and the effective provision of feedback in other lessons.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

There has been involvement of all stakeholders in the SSE planning process and the school has a school improvement plan (SIP) in place. The six-step process is used and it was reported by teachers, students, parents and other staff that they have been surveyed as part of the school improvement process. A co-ordinator for SSE carefully collates views of the various stakeholders. The SIP is published on the school's website.

The action plan for attainment is based on tracking data and analysis including comparisons with State Examination Commission (SEC) national norms; this informs the development of subject based action planning and developments in teaching, learning and assessment through teacher and department self-reflection.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has good capacity for improvement. The newly formed senior management team is committed to promoting a learning culture at the school. The forthcoming review of posts of responsibility has the potential to further support improvement through the careful identification of areas for development and the aligning of duties with these needs. It is recommended that the board oversees and makes strategic arrangements for the collaborative development of the next set of priorities.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St Michael's would like to welcome the WSE MLL report and to thank and congratulate all the stakeholders for their hard work that was validated in this report.

The Board of Management particularly notes the following findings;

- That St Michael's Loreto Navan fully complies with all matters relating to child protection.
- The Board's work is affirmed in the report as it highlights that 'Valuable work in areas that support school life is carried out by the in-school management team and other teachers'.
- The report acknowledges the great collaboration between teachers, pupils and parents when it acknowledges that 'A number of areas at the school have been developed to support students' wellbeing and there are a few examples where students' suggestions have prompted positive developments with regard to the arrangement of facilities'. This reinforces the student voice in the school.

It is evident that the Loreto ethos and charism of Mary Ward is a lived experience in the teaching and learning in the school where the report states that these most effective lessons were 'taking good cognisance of the range of student's preferred learning styles which have been an area of focus for teachers and students'

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

As part of actions on foot of the recommendations, the Board has put together a five-year strategic plan (SEE 2020-25), which is an organic document that will allow the school to respond to ever changing needs. It is going through the consultative process at the moment. It identifies areas of development for St Michael's going forward.

The Board welcomes the suggestion around a teaching and learning committee and plans are in place to recruit this committee, which will further aid the good teaching and learning practices as recognized in the report. The school's tuition time is now in full compliance with Circular M29/95 as evidenced in the 2020/21 timetable.

The report explicitly compliments the good work carried out by the school's qualified SET teachers. We will further implement the shared vision of the Inspectorate in continuing to meet students' identified needs.

In reviewing the structures around student voice, the school has responded in a practical way by facilitating an extra class in Transition Year. As recommended, we are exploring the subject sampling aspect of TY to facilitate students to make informed decisions for Senior Cycle.

The Board welcomes the direction and pathways for improvement which WSE-MLL affords the school, in making the strategic arrangements for the collaborative development of the next set of priorities.

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; |