

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Joseph's Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Foxford County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64640W

Date of Evaluation: 26-09-2018



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 meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	24 – 26 September 2018
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. Joseph's is a co-educational, standalone, voluntary post-primary school located in the town of Foxford. The school opened in 1961 and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Achonry. Enrolment currently stands at 485 students. This represents a thirty per-cent increase in enrolment in the past six years. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and a significant minority of the student population present with special educational needs (SEN). Lessons are held on three separate sites within the town; this poses significant logistical challenges for management, staff and students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of school management and leadership, encompassing board, senior and middle management, leadership of students, curriculum and facilities is satisfactory, ranging from good in some areas to fair in others.
- Students and parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school in general and most students reported that they feel safe, well cared for and that they are progressing with their school work; most students surveyed reported that they did not feel they had a say in how things are done in the school.
- The quality of teaching was good overall, ranging from satisfactory in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons, including a few instances of excellent practice.
- The quality of student learning was good overall, ranging from satisfactory or fair in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons.
- There has been a good level of progress in the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations; there is scope to further improve the collective implementation of formative assessment and differentiation strategies.
- Engagement with school self-evaluation (SSE) has been satisfactory to date; evaluation measures and the involvement of parents and students in the process need improvement.

Recommendations

- The board of management should establish a mechanism for the proactive and systematic review of school policies; key policies to be updated in the short term include the assessment policy and the code of behaviour.
- The further delegation of leadership responsibility among teachers should be undertaken through the empowerment of core teams in key areas such as student care, digital technology and SSE.

- A review of student representation in the school should be undertaken in order to ensure that students are facilitated in playing a more central leadership role in the school.
- Subject departments should agree and implement a range of formative assessment and differentiation strategies, share approaches to collective planning, and develop annual action plans to further improve subject/programme delivery.
- SSE should include more robust mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and involve the views of students and parents to a greater extent.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of school management and leadership, encompassing board, senior and middle management, leadership of students, curriculum and facilities is satisfactory, ranging from good in some areas to fair in others.

The school's senior management team (SMT) of principal and deputy principal presents as a unified team with a complementary set of skills. The principal's approach to management is characterised by a very strong work ethic and a commitment to being informed in relation to all aspects of school life. There is now a need for management to look at how there can be greater delegation of leadership and management responsibility among staff. The board monitors teaching and learning from state examinations results and inspection reports. To further strengthen the board's oversight role, consideration should be given to requesting a concise annual report from individual subject departments and from post holders in relation to progress made and challenges encountered in their work over the course of the year.

The school offers a broad curriculum in the context of its size. The preparation of the school timetable is primarily the responsibility of the deputy principal. This work is undertaken in the context of significant logistical constraints posed by high demand for access to the school's specialist rooms and the fact that the school site is spread over three locations. The school is in the process of applying for additional accommodation with the aim of alleviating the effect of these constraints.

The SEN department is co-ordinated jointly by three teachers and provides good support to a significant minority of students in the school. A good level of understanding exists among key personnel in relation to the new resource allocation model and practices such as team teaching have been introduced this year as a means of promoting a more inclusive approach to SEN provision. The management of SEN in the school is satisfactory. The number of teachers involved in the delivery of additional supports to students needs to be reduced through the formation of a core team. The school uses a variety of testing instruments to identify students' learning needs and good links with feeder primary schools provide useful additional data. In order to further inform the delivery of supports to first-year students in a timely and targeted manner, the timing of the administration of various testing instruments within the school calendar should be reviewed. Finally, the revised draft SEN policy should be finalised and ratified without delay in order to ensure that the updated provision is documented and communicated appropriately.

The vast majority of students, through interviews and questionnaires, reported that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that they feel safe and cared for. The guidance service is also highly valued by students. Key personnel with specific responsibilities in the area of student support report

directly to the principal in relation to their work and meet as a team about three times per year. It is recommended that the student support team (SST), as a structure, be facilitated in meeting on a more regular basis throughout the year. The DES publication *Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools* should be used as a guide to best practice in this regard.

The school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme is highly regarded by students and parents. In particular, students enjoy the subject-sampling opportunities, the variety of experiences that the programme has to offer and the scope that exists to engage in activities that develop a broader range of skills. As part of the annual review of the programme, the completion of an e-portfolio, rather than a paper-based approach, should be considered in order to further assist students in putting into practice the computer-based skills obtained throughout junior cycle.

A high proportion of students, when interviewed, indicated that the facilitation of a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities by the school was a major factor in why they chose the school. This extensive range of activities is facilitated through a very high level of volunteerism and goodwill on the part of staff.

Managing the organisation

Board members possess a range of relevant expertise in a variety of fields, including education. Areas in which the board is particularly active include finance, recruitment and staffing. Also, the board has taken a particular interest in the area of student and staff wellbeing and was instrumental in the introduction of a post of responsibility in the area of home-school communication.

The school's physical and financial resources are well managed. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard and health and safety considerations are well addressed. In particular, recent improvements in relation to traffic flow have improved safety in the vicinity of the school. It was also evident during the evaluation that the majority of teachers take a considerable amount of pride in maintaining their classrooms and in creating learning environments that are appealing and conducive to learning.

Many of the policies that are currently in operation are out of date and in need of review. While the board has identified policies for imminent review, it will be necessary to establish a programme of proactive, cyclical review in order to ensure that all policies are brought up-to-date and that the incoming board is clear on the need to re-visit policies systematically.

The school's middle management structure was the subject of a recent review. It is expected that two additional posts will become available in the coming months. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of duties related to school planning and the leadership of teaching and learning initiatives. Also, given the significant number of students presenting with additional learning needs, further allowance for the co-ordination of SEN should be facilitated either through the post structure or through the allocation of additional time for co-ordination duties.

Year heads meet individually with the principal on a weekly basis. Given the recommended allocation of additional time for SST meetings, consideration should be given to delegating more responsibility to the SST for deciding on any interventions which may be necessary to support individual students. This would involve year heads reporting periodically to the SST, particularly when issues of concern arise in a given year group. This would free up a considerable amount of the principal's time and would further harness the skills that are available within the SST.

The current code of behaviour has been in operation in the school for approximately ten years. A significant proportion of students and teachers, through both interviews and questionnaires, indicated that there were some issues with regard to the clarity of the code which can lead to a level of inconsistency in its implementation. Furthermore, the points-based sanction system leaves

significant scope for interpretation. It is recommended that a review of the code of behaviour be undertaken in consultation with all stakeholders.

Leading school development

The further development of communication structures within the school is a key priority for management and staff. Recent initiatives related to communication include the introduction of a text-messaging system, the development of a school app, the harnessing of social media and the more extensive use of email communication. Also, the introduction of posts of responsibility dedicated to public relations and to home-school communication underlines the commitment that exists in this important area.

The minutes of recent staff meetings indicate a strong focus on the dissemination of information to staff. While it is necessary that staff are kept abreast of such information, recent developments in communication structures provide scope to develop alternative approaches to the dissemination of such information, as has been done intermittently in the past. This would allow staff to engage to a greater extent with relevant content in advance of staff meetings and would allow more time for discussion.

The school has an active and highly supportive parents' council. Recently, the parents' council has played a central role in a number of initiatives related to wellbeing, building developments, traffic flow, digital technology in the classroom and the restructuring of the school week. Council members indicated that they feel a strong sense of connection to the school and feel consulted in relation to key decisions. Questionnaires involving the wider body of parents, however, indicate that a considerable minority of parents do not feel sufficiently informed in relation to school matters. Further consultation with parents is advised in order to identify the nature of any information deficit, perceived or otherwise, that may exist.

Developing leadership capacity

Teachers reported that the accessing of continuing professional development (CPD) is encouraged and facilitated by management. It was evident from lesson observations and discussions with teachers that a high level of capacity to engage in innovative classroom practices exists among members of the teaching staff. To further harness this significant resource, a working group should be established from the staff, under the auspices of SSE, in order to discuss and research best practice in teaching, learning and assessment and to share their findings with the wider body of staff.

The facilitation of student leadership is fair. Student representative structures in the school include the student council as well as the head boy and head girl who are elected by the staff. However, at the time of the evaluation, the student council had yet to be elected. Furthermore students felt that the student council, when in existence, did not have a sufficiently high profile in the school to be able to adequately represent student opinion on key issues and to effect change. In addition, most of the students surveyed felt that they did not have a say in the running of the school. It is therefore recommended that a review of student representation in the school be undertaken in order to ensure that students are afforded more meaningful opportunities to input into school life.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

The quality of student learning was good overall, ranging from satisfactory or fair in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons.

Students demonstrated high levels of motivation in most lessons, supported by high-quality lesson preparation on the part of the teacher. Students reported that they learn best when the lesson has a clear purpose and that they are less motivated in lessons that are more focused on the delivery of content. Indeed, when students were interviewed, they showed a very high level of insight into their preferred learning styles. It would be worthwhile for teachers to develop a systematic method of capturing this information and to use it to further enrich the learner experience.

Formative assessment practices were good in the majority of lessons and were excellent in a small number of lessons. Strategies such as mind-mapping were used to very good effect in some lessons as a means of eliciting and building upon students' prior knowledge and understanding. High-quality oral feedback was evident in most lessons and was complemented by in-depth written feedback in some cases. Learning intentions were used in the majority of lessons to provide students with a focus for their learning and served as an effective means of recapitulation at the end of lessons. Learning intentions were most effective when they were differentiated and articulated clearly. In cases where the intended learning and skill development was not explicitly communicated to students, the lessons lacked a clear purpose and students tended to lose focus.

Digital technology was used in the majority of lessons, primarily as a presentation tool. In some cases the available technology was used in a more engaging manner through the use of short video clips or for the display of exemplars of students' work. In order to build on these practices, a staff planning team should be formed with a view to collating and agreeing incremental strategies to increase the prevalence and effectiveness of digital technology as a learning tool. The findings of this group should be framed within a digital learning plan.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The quality of teaching was good overall, ranging from satisfactory in a small minority of lessons to good or very good in most lessons, including a few instances of excellent practice.

In the best lessons, there was clear explanation of concepts and high-quality modelling of the required skills. These inputs from the teacher were backed up by structured, task-based activities that were well timed and contained an appropriate amount of scaffolding to assist students in bridging the learning gap.

Teachers' individual planning for lessons was of a high standard in the majority of lessons. Supplementary resources were prepared in advance and, in the best cases, considerable thought had gone into how activities could be structured in a way that would advance the learning of all students in the class. In some cases, there was a need to plan for a greater range of activities to more fully cater for the range of abilities and learning styles.

The standard of collaborative planning was found to be satisfactory with subject and programme plans ranging in quality from fair to very good. In the best plans, syllabus/specification learning outcomes were linked to a range of methodologies, resources and assessment modes. The majority of plans contain records of students' performance in the certificate examinations along with a commentary on these results. Cross-curricular links have also been identified in the majority of plans. While it is useful to have this information collated, teachers should use this data as a basis for the development of an annual action plan. This plan should exploit the synergies that exist across subjects and programmes and should incorporate an analysis and synthesis of the data from certificate examinations to assist in devising actions that will build on strengths and address any deficits that may be identified.

All teachers have engaged with CPD related to the continued roll-out of the revised junior-cycle curriculum while teachers of relevant subjects have conducted Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings. It will be important to capture the learning from the SLAR process as part of the continued advancement of assessment practices in the school. Practices in relation to

assessment have already evolved in some instances through, for example, the replacement of end-of-term tests with classroom based assessments. In order to reflect these and other changes and to assist in planning strategically for the continued implementation of junior cycle, the assessment policy should be updated as a matter of priority, in consultation with students and parents.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Previous recommendations related to leadership and management have been well addressed.

Teaching and Learning

A high proportion of teaching and learning recommendations from previous inspections have focused on the areas of differentiation and formative assessment. While progress in each of these areas has been good, there is a need to continue to build on the progress that has been made. This should be done through the continued sharing of best practice in order to capitalise on the considerable in-house expertise that exists.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school's engagement with SSE has been satisfactory. Literacy, numeracy, formative assessment and SEN have been the areas of focus to date, with varying levels of success. The school's numeracy strategy involved a focus on developing a common approach to working with fractions across all subject areas. This is the area of SSE that has gained the most traction and the associated strategy is referenced in many of the subject plans. While other SSE areas have had some impact, the absence of a core team to drive the process has meant that the full impact of SSE has yet to be felt in the school. Also, students and parents were largely unaware of the process, indicating that further consultation and communication with these groups is necessary in future iterations of SSE; circular 40/2016 will be a useful reference. More robust mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies should also be developed.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

Management and staff in the school demonstrate a high level of capacity. In order for this capacity to be fully realised, the further distribution of leadership and management responsibilities should be prioritised. This will require a period of discussion and reflection among all stakeholders in order to determine how key areas of responsibility should be devolved. All stakeholders are ambitious for the school. The parents' council is a key support and has shown considerable capacity to drive change. Perhaps the greatest strength of the school is its students. In interactions with inspectors, they demonstrated that they are articulate, confident and proud of their school. The enhanced involvement of students in key decision-making about school life can bring only positive results.

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 welcomes the acknowledgement by the Inspectorate of the strength and quality of the student body and the commitment of staff to the students in their role as teachers and their voluntary contribution to ensuring the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The importance of Policy Review was addressed by the Board of Management at their opening meeting for 18/19 when the Code of Behaviour and Assessment Policy was set as priority for review.

The breath of Curriculum provided, acknowledged by the Inspectorate, is important to all stakeholders in meeting the interests and needs of the student body particularly as we are a stand – alone school. All stakeholders concur with the Inspectorate’s observations on the challenge of managing three sites and look forward to a positive response from the DES regarding the schools application for Additional Accommodation.

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 five additional Middle-Management Posts provided recently (May/September 2018) by the DES makes way for greater distribution of leadership into the future. The additional Management posts also provides opportunity for developments in areas identified by the Inspectorate in SSE, ICT, Policy Review and Development, Formation of Core Teams.

ICT was introduced into the Middle Management Team Structure in May 2018 and Policy Review introduced in November 2018.

An ICT team under the direction of the Deputy Principal is in place since commencement of this school year and is working on the development of an ICT plan overseeing the provision and use of ICT within the school. Members of the ICT team have attended in-service re. Digital Learning Framework and plans are in place with PDST representative to develop our schools ICT plan.

Management, Teachers and the Special Educational Needs team have actively engaged with the National Council for Special Educational Needs since February 2018 in the provision of and participation in CPD and planning for developments in SEN provision and Assessment of all students throughout our school.

The co-ordination of the SEN Department has been revised since commencement of school year 2018/19.

Following a review of subject planning by staff/management at the end of school year 2017/18, the Board acted on the recommendation to put in place a software package to facilitate collaborative planning within and between subject departments. Staff have commenced training on this software.

The experience of WSE has increased the profile and importance of the Student Council and it is hoped that this will be reflected in the student body’s engagement. There is a long tradition of Student Council at St. Joseph’s and election of a Student Council for 2018/19 is underway. A student committee was established at start of school year to review uniform. They have collected student preferences and are working with management on developments in this regard.

The Board’s commitment to Home School Communication and seeking the Opinion of Students will be further developed to include on-line surveys (subject to GDPR compliance) on topics of interest and school development to include School Self Evaluation. The Board looks forward to and welcomes the involvement and participation of all stakeholders.

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;