

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Augustine's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Abbeyside Dungarvan Co Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64890W

Date of Evaluation: 08-12-2017



What is 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.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Date of inspection	08-12-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with board of management• Meetings with principal and deputy principals• 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 Augustine's College is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Augustinian Trust with a current student cohort of 716 students. The school offers Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good to very good with examples of distributed leadership operating well in the school; there is scope to develop the board of management's focus on teaching and learning and strategic planning.
- The highly effective and committed senior management team leads staff to provide a caring, welcoming and supportive learning environment for students; some areas such as learning support need development.
- The curriculum offered to students is broad and balanced; some curricular provision arrangements need to be addressed.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in most lessons was good or very good; however, practice requiring considerable improvement was noted in a few lessons and the quality of collaborative planning varied.
- The school has made good to very good progress in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations.
- The school demonstrates a very good capacity to improve but its school self-evaluation (SSE) processes require development.

Recommendations

- The board should progress the preparation of a medium to long term strategic plan and develop its role as a leader of teaching and learning.
- The school's provision for students with additional needs should be benchmarked by senior management against best practice as set out in Circular 70/2014 and a board of studies should be established to address curricular areas that require attention.
- Teachers should fully adopt assessment for learning (AfL) practices, purposeful use of pair or group work, expansion of opportunities for student oracy and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a student learning tool into their pedagogical practice.

- The SSE process needs to be re-energised, and self-evaluation and review processes should be more routinely embedded in whole-school practice.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT.

The overall quality of school leadership and management is good to very good. Distributed leadership operates well in the school. There is scope to develop the board of management's focus on teaching, learning and strategic planning.

Leading learning and teaching

The work of the board and the senior management team, comprising the principal and two deputy principals, is guided by a clear shared vision to provide the highest quality educational experience for students based on the Augustinian core values of Unitas, Veritas, and Caritas.

Board members demonstrated high levels of involvement and commitment to the success of the school. The principal works assiduously with the board to maintain an effective learning organisation. The board demonstrates educational leadership through its support for the embedding of the new junior cycle, the progression of e-learning and its intent to establish a review of senior cycle. To strengthen its role in educational leadership, the board should consider inviting contributions from subject and programme coordinators and post-holders and to be more proactive when reviewing student academic achievement.

The recent addition of a second deputy principal to the senior management team with responsibility for progressing the quality of teaching and learning should strengthen educational leadership in the school. The senior management team leads learning through its support for subject planning and through the provision of whole-school continuing professional development (CPD). The school's involvement in the Action Learning Network as part of the Forbairt Programme is praiseworthy as it supports collaborative engagement with formative assessment practices.

The academic progress of third and sixth-year students is monitored by their relevant year head. To facilitate students to become more responsible for their own learning and progress, this good practice should be expanded to include a mentoring system that would include relevant data from the primary school and students' results from school-based assessments.

Designated hours allocated by the Department to support students with additional learning needs are used for their intended purpose. Almost two thirds of teachers in the school deliver learning support to students. While there is a strong commitment to supporting these students, there is a need for a more systematic approach to deploying and recording the supports provided and to tracking and evaluating students' progress. Team teaching should be further developed to maximise the use of resources. The special educational needs (SEN) policy should be further developed to document the specific practices of the school. The work of the learning support department should be informed by Circular 070/2014.

The ethos of the school as a caring, supportive and respectful learning community was evident during the evaluation. A well-organised care system is in place, the weekly meetings of the junior and senior care teams with senior management facilitate timely attention to issues of concern. In addition, the chaplaincy and guidance services, the class tutor and year head help to foster positive relations between students.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum. First-year students undertake short taster courses in practical subjects and in modern languages. School management should consider extending this practice to all subjects. As part of the proposed senior cycle review, the provision of only four lesson periods for some subjects in fifth-year, and engagement in the LCVP should be included in discussions. The establishment of a board of studies to review all curriculum provision should be considered by management. Teachers are deployed according to their qualifications and expertise. Management and staff are commended for their provision of a broad range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

The LCVP is taken by all students. However, only students who have the necessary vocational subject grouping requirements are eligible to sit the certificate examinations. While the learning experiences of the programme is of benefit to all students, the requirement that all students engage in the programme should be reviewed to ensure there is full student engagement.

The TY programme provides an appropriate range of experiences for students. Consideration should now be given to formalising the assessment practice across all subject areas to ensure that all the modules delivered benefit the ethos of TY. The large number of teachers delivering TY do not meet as a team; it is advisable that they meet to discuss the programme. Senior management should consider the formation of a core team to provide additional oversight of the programme.

Managing the organisation

The senior management team, provides very good quality leadership and management of the school community which is characterised by high levels of collaboration and respect for staff, parents and students. Senior management is visibly present within the school and operates an open-door policy. Internal communication is maintained through electronic mail and notices in the staffroom. The informative website and social media forum are regularly updated to provide information to the wider school community.

The board discharges its responsibilities with integrity and transparency. Minutes of board meetings indicate that very good attention is given to most aspects of school management. The comprehensive report relayed by the principal at board meetings provides members with very good information on the operation of the school. An agreed report is prepared for staff and the parents' association after each meeting; this is good practice.

Policy development is good in the school. A committee comprising of parents, teachers and students reviews policies when they are in draft form; it is advised that this approach be adopted when policies are at an earlier stage of development. All the mandatory policies, with the exception of the data protection policy, which is in draft form, have been ratified by the board. The admissions policy is welcoming of all students. Aspects of this policy, relating to the enrolment of students with SEN should reflect current practice. The school should indicate clearly its enrolment capacity.

The code of behaviour is a lengthy document that does not have a clear ladder of referral; it should be revised to incorporate the student behaviour charter, a clear ladder of referral and reflect restorative justice practices. The school's merit system should also be reviewed as it is not working effectively or is it valued by students.

The building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. There has been good strategic planning by the board to provide additional classrooms and specialist art and music rooms. The intended re-development of the library is welcomed by students. An e-learning strategy is in place and there are

plans to increase necessary access to computers. Environmental responsibility in the maintenance and use of facilities and resources is actively promoted through the Green Schools programme.

Leading school development

The board and senior management team demonstrate a firm commitment to the development of the school in line with identified priorities. The comprehensive and informative school plan provides a clear overview of how the school is organised. The principal, in consultation with the school's assistant principals, has identified meaningful priorities for the current academic year such as the development of e-learning and peer collaboration, the embedding of the new junior cycle and wellbeing programme for the current school year. This good work should contribute to the preparation of a collaboratively developed medium to long term strategic plan to steer the school into the future.

Through the subject planning process, the principal encourages teachers to discuss how priorities such as well-being, literacy and numeracy are embedded into daily school life. In keeping with good practice, the principal meets subject convenors annually to discuss the work of their departments and also meets individual teachers in a formal context if requested.

Senior management and the board value partnership with parents as a means of supporting students' learning and wellbeing. The work of the school is supported by a small but active parents' association. Regular meetings of the association take place and are generally attended by the principal and a member of the teaching staff who provide regular updates regarding the school.

The principal is involved in a local network of school principals. This is good practice. Mathematics teachers meet with their primary school colleagues to discuss student's learning experiences in Mathematics. This commendable practice could be extended to other subject areas.

Developing leadership capacity

Leadership opportunities for staff and students in the school are good and are continuing to prosper. The principal creates and motivates staff teams to lead developments in key areas such as wellbeing, eLearning, healthy eating and assessment. Teachers have tangible input into the decision-making process. Senior management expressed appreciation for the work of post holders and individual and collective staff contributors to school life during the course of the evaluation.

Assistant principals (AP) are developing their role in the management and leadership of the school. The schedule of posts has evolved following a number of reviews. It is now recommended that the current post structure be further examined to ensure that the emerging needs of the school continue to be addressed and any imbalances are eliminated.

Year heads are drawn from both the AP and the special duties posts of responsibility. There is scope to further develop the year-head role in the context of student management and leadership for learning. Year heads should consider remaining with their year group as they progress through junior or senior cycle. As part of their role in the leadership of learning, year heads could work with individual students as they set goals and learning targets that will enable them to reach their full potential.

Students are afforded good leadership opportunities through activities such as the mentoring programme with first-year students, the paired mathematics class led by TY students, the student advocacy group, the Green School committee and the student council. The student council meets regularly, is representative of all year groups and is in regular dialogue with the principal. To strengthen the role of the student council, its members should seek more effective ways of

communicating with the general student body. The board should also consider meeting with the student council annually.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in most lessons were good or very good; however, practice requiring considerable improvement was noted in a few lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Thirty three lessons were observed. Effective or highly effective practice in the use of active methodologies and promotion of the student voice was observed in the majority of lessons.

The learning experience was positive for most students. They engaged well with lessons and applied themselves diligently to their work. Active student participation was encouraged through question-and-answer sessions and there was good opportunity for student discussion, particularly in the non-examination lessons. Students' interest and motivation was evident in their own questioning of teachers, in predicting outcomes in practical lessons and, as noted in some instances, in the sharing of knowledge acquired through students' own reading. Student reflection was also encouraged in many lessons, but mainly on the topic or activity in hand; all students should be encouraged to reflect on their learning, working out how they learn best and how to improve.

Some lessons were predominantly teacher led and this resulted in varying levels of student passivity and disengagement. In these instances, teachers should become more attentive to the dynamic in the classroom and vary their methodologies to respond to the interests and motivational needs of the students.

There was limited evidence of students engaging in the target language, either spontaneously or in prepared interactions, in most of the language lessons observed. Greater use of the target language by both the teacher and the students, within the context of an integrated approach to develop all the language skills, should be progressed and opportunities afforded to students in all lessons to interact with the teacher and with their peers.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Most lessons were well prepared, structured and paced. Learning intentions were communicated to students at the outset of all lessons. Very good practice was noted in some instances where the intentions for the lesson were linked to the longer-term learning outcomes for the subject. However, in some lessons, the learning intentions were not revisited to effectively ascertain student progress.

ICT was used effectively to support learning in a number of lessons. There were other instances where greater and more creative use of ICT would have enhanced learning and the enjoyment of the lesson. Teachers should also use ICT in supporting the diverse needs of the student cohort, in particular for students with additional educational needs.

The majority of teachers maintained an appropriate balance between teacher instruction and student activity. Highly effective pair or group work was noted where the assigned tasks had a clear purpose and students benefited from the collaboration and exchange of ideas. However, there were a number of lessons where pair or group tasks were assigned without due attention to the purpose of the task and to the intended learning outcomes, and while students were told to work in groups, they completed the tasks individually.

There were many lessons where opportunities to actively develop students' literacy and numeracy skills were not availed of. In a small number of lessons, explicit attention was attributed to students' creative writing skills or to speaking in front of the class group. In other lessons, students' oral literacy would have been enhanced had greater attention been given to their presentation skills. There was very limited reference to numeracy in lessons other than mathematics-related lessons. Greater awareness of the different aspects of literacy and numeracy development should be encouraged.

Teachers used good questioning strategies that resulted in optimum student participation and appropriate challenge for the higher-achieving student. Student responses and interactions provided good evidence of successful learning outcomes in the majority of lessons.

An examination of student copybooks indicated that homework is given and corrected. In a small minority of copybooks, students' written assignments were not corrected, this should be addressed. While some teachers provided students with oral feedback on their work, there was limited evidence of written formative feedback in students' copybooks. This practice should be developed as it will inform students of their strengths and areas for development, in addition to giving them greater responsibility for their own learning.

The quality of collaborative planning varied. Some subject department plans were well advanced with the creation of meaningful curriculum plans, while others require further development. All plans commendably reference the new junior cycle, the statements of learning either envisaged or already established for different subject areas, and information on the promotion of wellbeing in teachers' individual and collective practice.

Collective planning for the implementation of the new junior-cycle specifications has commenced in some subject areas. However, planning for the more recently introduced specifications has yet to begin. In these instances it is recommended that the relevant subject departments access the junior cycle for teachers (JCT) website for resources and supports in beginning the process.

Some TY subject plans and modules are not well developed and should be redesigned. Best practice was observed where plans reflected the national aims of TY and where learning outcomes were linked to details on the methodologies, resources, key skills and assessment modes used in the delivery of the module. This good practice should be replicated across all TY plans. Planning for LCV also requires some improvement.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The school has made good to very good progress in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations.

Leadership and Management

Very good progress has been made on management-related recommendations from previous evaluations. Recommendations relating to timetabling, curriculum planning, updating of school policies and documentation, time in school and review of posts have been diligently addressed by senior management reflecting the effective leadership and management of the school. In general, management share recommendations arising from all inspections with all teachers for the purpose of integrating best practice throughout the whole school.

Teaching and Learning

Good progress has been made on teaching and learning-related recommendations from previous evaluations. Recommendations from previous reports focused on improvements in the areas of planning, greater use of varied methodologies, ICT, questioning techniques, reflection and assessment strategies and student and teacher use of the target language. Subject departments and teachers have made substantial progress in the effective implementation of many of these recommendations. Considerable progress has been made in developing subject plans. Areas that still require further development are the student and teacher use of the target language and ICT usage.

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

Overall, the school demonstrates a very good capacity to improve but its school self-evaluation (SSE) processes require development.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Senior management and teaching staff generally adopt a reflective approach to their work. The findings of a school review on reflective practice carried out in 2016 indicate an openness to self-review and school improvement.

Satisfactory progress has been made in relation to SSE. The process has been used to identify school improvement targets for literacy, numeracy and assessment for learning. While agreed goals were well intentioned, the links between them and the improvement targets have been tenuous. The lack of a whole-school approach, the general absence of parent and student reflection and of measurable outcomes are deficits in the process. It is recommended that the school strengthen its SSE process to ensure targets are routinely embedded in classroom practice and that a whole-school partnership approach in keeping with the SSE guidelines is followed. The School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 should inform practice.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

Senior management is well set to lead the process of self-evaluation and school improvement. It is important that the board of management be fully involved in this process.

The work of the school community is characterised by team work, commitment, professionalism and a shared vision. Systems relating to student care, student management, guidance and education support are well developed. The experience of students and parents in the school is very good as evidenced in the very positive responses to the questionnaires administered as part of the WSE-MLL process. Under the leadership of the current school management team, and with the commitment and team work of all staff members, the school has very good capacity to further develop based on its own school self-evaluation processes.

5. CHILD PROTECTION

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools.

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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Augustine's College welcomes the extremely positive and affirming WSE-MLL report. The visit has given us the support, advice and impetus to move forward in all areas of Teaching and Learning.

The report notes the many very good practices in the school and particularly:

- Leadership of teaching and learning is good to very good,
- The very good quality of care for students and the highly effective Pastoral Care policy based on a whole school approach,
- The broad, balanced and very good range of subjects on offer which enables very good educational opportunities for all students,
- The committed Senior Management Team (SMT) contribute to the effective running of the school,
- The good to very good teaching and learning taking place in the school,
- The senior management team's leadership and management is strong and has a clear focus for improvements in learning and teaching,
- The strong evidence of distributed leadership being developed among teaching staff and students.

All of the above findings affirm our school's commitment to providing excellence in learning and teaching. It also affirms the atmosphere of mutual respect which permeates throughout the school.

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

The Board of Management acknowledges the recommendations made in the report and is committed to acting on them and to the ongoing development of St. Augustine's College. We have already moved forward on the recommendations made, and will take on board all the recommendations and have highlighted these in our strategic planning. The Board is very pleased with this positive report and intends to use the recommendations to further serve the needs of our students in accordance with our Mission statement.

- The new Board has initiated a strategic three-year plan which includes a rolling review of all school policies, curricular and ICT provision, developing a board of studies and setting up a TY core team,
- The Board is analysing its role and is reviewing its function in leading teaching and learning into the future,

- The Board is currently reviewing the schools needs and the current schedule of posts to bring them in line with Circular 003/2018,
- The Board will ensure redevelopment and reorganisation of the SEN department to bring the SEN department in line with Circular 70/2014,
- The Board encourages and supports active teaching methodologies and strategies for AfL and ICT as a student tool. Teachers will receive CPD in-services in these areas along with many more into the future,
- A whole staff peer collaborative approach is in use and will be further developed to enhance teaching and learning,
- The school has already re-engaged with the SSE process and currently see the established successful Forbairt programme as part of this engagement. The Board and the SMT are committed to this process and See it as a vehicle for school improvement,
- Subject departments will review, analyse and track student attainment to support and affirm students and a board of studies will be established.

The Board of Management of St. Augustine's College will continue to develop all aspects of our school through continued engagement with all stakeholders based on the Augustinian core values Of *Unitas, Veritas* and *Caritas*.