

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Angela's Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ursuline Convent Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64990D

Date of Evaluation: 14-09-2017



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 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.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Date(s) of inspection	14-09-2017
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. Angela's Ursuline Convent is a Catholic voluntary secondary school for girls. Originally founded by the Ursuline Order of sisters in 1816, the school is now under the trusteeship of Le Chéile: a Catholic Schools' Trust. It has a current enrolment of 926 students. The school offers the junior cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The new senior management team, combining the principal and three newly-appointed deputy principals, provides highly effective leadership for the school; it is therefore timely that further leadership opportunities at middle-management be developed.
- Very high quality student support is in place in the school but attention to more formal structures and aspects of provision for special education needs (SEN) require further development.
- The board provides very effective management and leadership for the school, although communication with stakeholders and some aspects of TY curricular provision require further attention.
- A significant change agenda has been developed by the senior management team in conjunction with the board.
- Overall, the quality of teaching was very good with many instances of excellent practice; as a consequence, the quality of learner experiences and learner outcomes was also very high.
- Reflection and review are embedded practice in the school, although school self-evaluation (SSE) is currently in abeyance.

Recommendations

- A team structure for student support should be established within a whole-school guidance plan, to sustain and formalise current very good practice.
- Senior management should ensure that the specific recommendations regarding priority timetabling, co-ordination time, planning for and organisation of provision for SEN be implemented.
- The provision of Woodwork as a TY option should cease based on health and safety risks and the lack of an appropriately qualified specialist teacher on the staff.
- Opportunities for leadership roles at middle-management level should be further developed.

- The board, in conjunction with senior management, should oversee the activation of SSE, particularly in relation to teaching and learning, and the board should further develop communication with key stakeholders in the school.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1 QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The new senior management team is central to leading very good quality learning and teaching in the school. This team, combining the principal and three new deputy principals provides highly effective leadership for the school. They have fostered a significant team approach to leading school development and they share a very positive and complementary working relationship. They communicate well with each other and decision making is a shared process.

A very positive and caring learning environment and atmosphere is evident. This has been achieved through the fostering of very effective partnerships and the communication of a shared vision for the school among the board, the senior management team, staff and the wider school community. Priorities for leading the school have been identified and include student support; a curriculum review, and improving structures that impact positively on the day-to-day running of the school.

The senior management team is central to student management. Members of the team have facilitated the year heads and class tutors to focus more on, and to develop, their pastoral care roles for students. This provides for further development of structures that impact positively on students' holistic development and experiences in school.

Very high quality student-support structures are established and the school actively engages in strategies and practices to support students' educational, vocational, social and personal wellbeing. These include: social personal and health education (SPHE) provided for all; a wellbeing programme; the class tutor and year-head structure; Guidance, and a SEN support team. Whole-school guidance is at a well advanced stage with recognition that everyone has a contribution to make in promoting and supporting student wellbeing. A more formalised student support-team structure should be established within a whole-school guidance plan that will both sustain and formalise current very good practice.

A significant number of teaching resources are allocated to the school to provide support for students with SEN. Members of the SEN core team and special needs assistants (SNAs), under the guidance of the co-ordinator, demonstrate that they are reflective practitioners, who are endeavouring to embrace the key principles of the revised allocation model (RAM) for SEN, to enhance the quality of provision. The whole-school inclusion and SEN policy has been reviewed in light of the RAM for SEN and its associated guidelines. This is very positive. However, this policy should be shared and agreed with the whole-staff, parents, students and the board. This is particularly important in order to raise awareness amongst the whole staff that one of the key principles of the RAM is the development of a truly inclusive school, and the role of the mainstream subject teacher is central to achieving this.

The additional teaching supports are provided mostly through a model of withdrawal, with some in-class support provided for some students. To provide more effective supports, groups of students who have been identified with SEN, and who are being withdrawn from subjects to receive supports, should be organised based on similarity of needs.

Currently, timetabling of most of the supports for SEN takes place after the construction of the overall school timetable and at the beginning of the academic school year. Providing continuity of quality supports for students and co-ordinating provision is therefore challenging. The SEN department

should plan to provide student-centred supports for students and organise the supports based on identified needs and on priority learning targets for students. Time for this co-ordination and student-centred planning for the organisation of SEN provision should be provided and formalised. Timetabling of support lessons should take place in conjunction with the formation of the overall timetable, to ensure continuity of quality supports and optimal use of the allocated teaching resources for students with SEN.

The holistic development of all students is central to the work of the school and the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum encourages this. The timetable demonstrates very good planning principles, with the exception of the aforementioned timetabling of additional teaching supports for students with SEN. The school's engagement with the Framework for Junior Cycle is progressing. Junior cycle students are offered a core curriculum and a range of optional subjects, which are chosen before entering first year. The board and senior management, as part of the planned curriculum review, should explore ways in which first-year students can be better informed before making their selection of subjects. Classes are organised on a mixed-ability basis, mostly. It is very positive that the initial steps in the implementation of the Wellbeing programme have been undertaken within current timetabling structures.

A well-organised, compulsory TY programme is provided. It is positive that students in TY are provided with a subject-sampling experience, enabling them to make informed decisions on subjects they choose to study as they progress to Leaving Certificate. The board and senior management are aware of the importance of continuing to meet the changing needs of students. However, the provision of Woodwork as a TY option should cease based on the health and safety risks associated with the room provided for this activity, and the lack of an appropriately qualified specialist teacher of Material Technology Wood or Construction Studies on the staff.

Well-established and highly effective LCA and LCVP programmes are provided. The LCVP is well organised and planned, notwithstanding the timetabling of two class periods outside of the timetabled day. Links with Guidance are strong, maximising cross-curricular links. Access to LCVP should be broadened to include all students who satisfy the requirements and who wish to avail of the programme. LCA work experience currently takes place in blocks of ten weeks. However, students are not timetabled for lessons on days when they are not participating in work experience. This needs to be addressed as a matter of priority by providing timetabled instruction, or further work experience, outside of the ten week block, thereby optimising students' time in school and their engagement with the programme.

High academic expectations for all students in the school are evident. It is very positive and timely that a curriculum review is an identified priority for senior management. Areas under consideration focus on the potential needs of students, including further access to Applied Mathematics; broadening access to the LCVP; introduction of new subjects at senior cycle, and the introduction of Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) for students with mild and moderate general learning difficulties.

A comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities is available to students. These activities are clearly a very significant aspect of the student experience in the school and are celebrated by the school community. The voluntary commitment and contribution of staff members in this provision is recognised and commended.

Managing the organisation

The board of management, in conjunction with senior management, provides very effective leadership and management to the school. The current board is appropriately constituted and well informed through regular, well-conducted and attended meetings. The experience and commitment of the

board is very evident, and it is well supported in carrying out its work by the trustee, Le Chéile, and by the Ursuline Order, with whom they maintain strong links.

It is very positive that the roles and responsibilities of the new deputy-principal team have been explored and developed, arising from a collaborative needs analysis for the school. This process was initiated by the principal and the board in an open and collegial manner. A significant change agenda has been developed by this team and includes a post-of-responsibility review, whole-school engagement with the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, and SSE initiatives.

The board is aware of its statutory obligations and responsibilities. Relevant child protection and anti-bullying procedures are in place. A comprehensive policy framework is established and mandatory policies have been adopted. Priorities for the review and updating of policies have been identified and cyclical, collaborative structures for review are in place.

The inclusive nature of the school is very evident in the lived experience of students. The board should however review some of the wording of the admissions' policy to reflect this.

The board, with the support of the Ursuline Order, has played a significant role in managing and overseeing the development and refurbishment of the very high quality school building.

Communication from the board includes agreed reports on board meetings to staff and parents. However, teachers and parents indicated that further enhancement of communication from the board should be considered. The board should improve its communication with all stakeholders. This could be achieved through providing an annual report as required by the Education Act (1998), and through the issuing of SSE and school improvement planning (SIP) reports as the process of SSE progresses.

Leading school development

The board and senior management are actively engaged in developing the quality of educational provision in the school. The board is also very aware of the leadership opportunities provided to the management team with the appointment of three new deputy principals. It is alert and responsive to the needs of the school, its staff and student cohort and key development priorities have been identified.

The ethos of the school reflects a strong commitment to passing on the Catholic faith in line with the Ursuline tradition; it is holistic and encourages inclusion; celebration of diversity; respect; engagement; positive relationships, and wellbeing. It is evident that the ethos is shared and lived within the school community.

The senior management team demonstrates a deep understanding and commitment to the school, its traditions and its place in the community of Waterford, as well as to its future development. This commitment extends to the well-being of all staff and students. An induction programme supports the integration of newly appointed staff, and it is very positive that structures are in place to mentor and support new staff. The introduction of the Droichead programme for newly qualified teachers is a positive development to support these teachers.

The school is supported in its work by an active and engaged parents' association. The majority of parents in their responses to the questionnaires feel welcome in the school, which is very positive. The parents' association should consider strengthening its communication with the wider parent community however, as parents highlighted this as an area for development.

Developing leadership capacity

Developing leadership capacity is a focus for senior management, whose leadership style is to devolve responsibility and to encourage leadership roles. They consult with, and listen to staff, and opportunities to lead are well distributed among teachers. There is a clear willingness among all staff to engage with the work of the school and the commitment of staff to the school and to the students is very evident. This is reflected in their willingness to volunteer in relation to the positions of year head; class tutors; within the extra-curricular programme, and to contribute to the wide range of school activities.

A well-established middle-management structure, incorporating assistant principals and special duties teachers, is in place. Post-holders carry out their assigned duties in an effective and dedicated manner. The aforementioned post-of-responsibility review should consider leadership roles at middle-management level, in addition to the current duties that are attached to posts and those that are undertaken voluntarily. Further enhancement of leadership roles should support the vision of senior management for the school. An inclusive reflection and consultation process could be used to effect these changes, based on the identified needs of the school into the future.

The subject-department structure is well established and is a strength of the school. Subject co-ordinators are in place and a strong sense of department teams is evident. Further leadership opportunities should be considered in the context of rotating the role of subject co-ordinator within the existing strong subject-department structure. These rotating roles would allow for the sharing of subject and programme skills and knowledge, particularly as the school progresses the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, and the planned curriculum review.

Opportunities for student leadership are promoted through the school's Ceannaire Programme, where fifth-year students mentor incoming first-year students, and through a peer-tutoring programme. The senior head girl and prefect system is a well-established structure to also encourage student leadership. A large number of students expressed a view through questionnaires distributed as part of this evaluation, that they do not have a say in how things are done in the school and this current structure may be contributing to this. It is recommended that more formal structures, based on a student council model, be established to allow for quality student voice in the school.

Child Protection Procedures

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.

2 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

Learner experiences and learner outcomes of very good quality were evident in all lessons observed. This was achieved through many opportunities for students to actively engage and participate in their learning through independent, pair and/or small-group tasks. Students' enjoyment in their learning was demonstrated by a clear sense that they were motivated to learn and to achieve, through meaningful, attainable and challenging learning outcomes. Uptake and outcomes for students in certificate examinations are very good.

A very positive rapport between students and teachers, and between students themselves, was evident in all aspects of the school. This contributed to a calm and supportive learning environment which encouraged students to be positively engaged in their learning, and to be focused and on task. Through the careful planning and structuring of group activities, students were confident to speak and to contribute to class discussions and to their learning.

Very good use of information communications technology (ICT) as a tool for learning, and use of the target language in language lessons, enriched students' learning experience.

Students were appropriately challenged and encouraged in lessons, and learning was supported through the careful design of purposeful tasks and through the creation of opportunities to provide individual support for learning. There is scope for the development and encouragement of more independent and enquiry-based learning opportunities for students. This might be positively promoted through the school's engagement with the National Digital Strategy through their e-learning plan. Based on students' responses to questionnaires, and an examination of student work, further development of formative assessment strategies is a suggested area for discussion between students and teachers.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Overall, the quality of teaching was very good with many instances of excellent practice observed in lessons. Lessons visited were across a range of year groups, programmes and subjects.

Teachers' individual practice was very good and was characterised by very effective lesson preparation and the selection, use and design of very good resources. Clear, coherent lesson structures were evident, and this structure was further supported by the sharing of learning intentions with students in almost all lessons. There were very good links with and reflection on prior learning and learning was encouraged and reinforced through well-structured tasks. Lessons were delivered at an appropriate pace.

A variety of teaching approaches was used to engage students in their learning. Clear explanations and instructions were provided to students and focused listening and watching activities were a strong feature of many lessons. Note-making was an embedded practice in many lessons.

Very effective practice was seen in nearly all lessons where students had opportunities to work together in structured group activities. This facilitated student learning that was task-based and challenging, and encouraged students to work collaboratively in a purposeful manner. Sometimes tasks were further scaffolded, allowing for differentiation of content and task. Time during these activities allowed for very good teacher circulation to support students individually during the tasks and to provide support for the skills being encouraged and taught. Some further consideration should be given to the desk arrangement of some classrooms to allow for easier transitions between whole-class and collaborative teaching and learning activities.

Consolidation of learning was a strong feature of lessons. There was also good assessment of learning evident. There is however, scope for teachers to broaden the variety of questioning techniques used, in order to promote more critical and higher-order thinking to challenge student learning and understanding. Discussion at whole-staff level to further the development of formative assessment strategies such as assessment for learning (AfL) techniques should also be considered. This would further encourage students to take ownership of their learning, and to lead and to explore learning.

Very effective use of ICT by teachers was observed. This included the use of visuals, animations, social media platforms, audio visual clips and links to relevant websites. The challenge for the school is how to encourage more student use of these technologies in lessons to aid learning. The school e-learning plan and teacher collaboration should help to advance this.

Teacher collaborative practice is very good, particularly through the subject-department structure. Teaching strategies and resources are shared amongst these subject department teams. Staff regularly participate in relevant continuing professional development (CPD) activities and avail of opportunities to share the learning with colleagues during staff meetings. Much of the CPD is conducted in-house, with staff providing training in areas of interest to colleagues.

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Very good progress has been made by the board in the implementation of recommendations from previous completed evaluations. These include the provision of double periods in Physical Education; the ending of the timetabling of study periods, and the provision of subject choice in fifth year, based on students' preferences.

Teaching and Learning

Strategies are in place to ensure that recommendations from previous evaluation reports are implemented. Recommendations regarding teaching and learning are discussed with the board of management and with subject departments and staff.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The SSE process has informed progress in the school's chosen areas of literacy and numeracy in recent years. School improvement plans have been developed and implemented in these areas. Engagement with the SSE action-planning cycle should now however, be re-activated. The board in conjunction with senior management should oversee the activation of SSE particularly in relation to aspects of teaching and learning and classroom practice. The board should also ensure that such activities are reported to the school community.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

There was much evidence gathered to suggest that the school is self-evaluating on an on-going basis and that it has the capacity to improve. The recent collaborative analysis of needs carried out before the appointment of the three new deputy principals serves as a fine example of the school's capacity to self-evaluate. Ongoing review was also evident in the work of year heads, class tutors, subject departments, post-holders, programme co-ordinators and teachers.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

1. The Board of Management confirms that the provision of Woodwork as a TY option ceased immediately during the MLL when the issues of Health and Safety were pointed out to the school.

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;