An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>C.B.S. Roscommon</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Abbeytown Roscommon Co. Roscommon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>65080P</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 05 April 2017
WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?
Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make 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

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>03-05 April 2017</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • 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 |

• Meeting with board of management  
• Meetings with principal and deputy principal  
• Meetings with key staff  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Student focus-group interview |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

CBS Roscommon is a voluntary secondary school for boys dating back to 1937. The school operates under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools’ Trust (ERST), is one of three post-primary schools in the town of Roscommon and has a strong tradition of both academic and sporting achievement. The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate. Enrolment currently stands at 350 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• The board of management and the senior management team provide informed and effective leadership to the school; a more strategic focus is now required.
• Care teams, in conjunction with the school’s special educational needs (SEN) and guidance services, ensure that a high level of support is provided for students.
• The quality of teaching was good or very good in almost all of the lessons observed; the standard of written formative feedback to students is an area for development.
• The quality of student learning was good or very good in most of the lessons observed; strategies to increase the level of challenge for the more able students require further development in some cases.
• There has been a high level of successful engagement with the recommendations from previous evaluations.
• School self-evaluation (SSE) processes are evolving and are supported effectively through the middle management structure.
• New subject specifications of the revised Junior Cycle are being implemented but some elements are not being delivered; the reason was reported to be industrial action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• The board of management should oversee the formulation and implementation of a strategic plan for the future development of the school, to be driven by senior management, in consultation with staff, parents and students.
• The TY plan should be reviewed and updated to include greater detail on how the programme is organised and how curricular aspects are to be delivered.
• Teachers should ensure the further enhancement of student learning by expanding the range and effectiveness of formative feedback and differentiation strategies used in lessons.
The continued development of SSE practices should be achieved through the establishment of a clearer distinction between targets and strategies, thus informing the implementation of more robust monitoring procedures.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management

The overall quality of leadership and management in CBS Roscommon is good. The current board of management is in place since October 2016, and a number of its members have a long association with the school. Board members possess a good range of expertise, particularly in the field of education and all members have received training for their role.

Board meetings are held regularly throughout the year and, in accordance with good practice, agreed reports from all meetings are issued in writing to staff and to the parents’ association. In order to further increase the board’s oversight in relation to teaching and learning and in relation to the operation of the middle-management structure, the board should request and annual report from each subject department and each post holder. This report should detail the progress made and any areas for development.

Board members, in conjunction with the senior management team, have identified a number of whole-school priorities for future school development spanning teaching and learning, assessment, professional development and the embedding of SSE practices. These priorities, as well as other priorities that may emerge, should now become part of a strategic plan for school development, using the SSE six-step process as an overarching structure.

The school has an active and very well informed parents’ association (PA). The PA provides ongoing assistance to the school through a range of initiatives. Members of the PA who were interviewed during the evaluation praised the very good communication structures that are in place between school and home and reported that they have been surveyed in relation to issues such as anti-bullying, homework and information and communications technology (ICT).

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The senior management team of principal and deputy principal has led a number of advancements in recent years in areas such as policy development, communication and the promotion of innovative teaching and learning practices. They work very well together and their individual skill sets are complementary. Each has had to take on a considerable number of additional duties in recent years due to the reduction in the number of middle management posts of responsibility available to the school. Advancements in subject planning practices are currently being led by the senior management team and common templates for schemes of work are approaching completion. These templates should include a section in which whole-school SSE strategies can be tailored to individual subjects.

Questionnaires administered to parents, students and teachers during the evaluation indicate high levels of satisfaction in relation to how the school is run. Students and parents who were interviewed
during the evaluation indicated that the school has gone through a very positive transition in recent years, particularly in terms of the quality of teaching and learning and the level of communication between school and home.

The main focus of the middle-management posts of responsibility is on year-head and co-ordination duties. The last review of the post structure was conducted in 2013 and the addition of SSE to the list of duties is a positive development. In order to ensure that the post structure continues to meet the needs of the school, it will be important to build in a periodic review of the post structure.

The school’s care structures are guided by the work of two care teams, one covering junior cycle and the other senior cycle. These care teams have weekly timetabled meetings in which care issues are discussed and interventions planned. The guidance counsellor and a member of the senior management team attends each meeting, thus creating a useful and necessary link between the two teams.

The school’s class tutor system has not operated in the last two years. Time constraints were reported as the reason for this. In the context of the introduction of Wellbeing as a major part of the revised junior-cycle curriculum, the re-introduction of a class tutor system should be carefully considered. Responses to student questionnaires indicate the need to look at how the school is catering for relationships and sexuality education. This issue should also be incorporated into discussions around Wellbeing.

The school employs a qualified guidance counsellor. Guidance is a timetabled subject for senior-cycle students and there are targeted interventions for junior-cycle students. The guidance plan is well developed and provides a comprehensive overview of how the guidance and counselling service operates. There are good supports in place for students during periods of transition and there are very good links to the social, personal and health education (SPHE) programme. The implications of Budget 2017 mean that the school will be able to expand its existing counselling service from September 2017. This will have implications for the teaching of SPHE and it will therefore be important to build capacity in this area.

After-school study is facilitated in the school and all students and their parents have had access to inputs in relation to study skills from both internal and external facilitators. These inputs received a high level of praise from both parents and students. Mental health awareness has also been high on the agenda in the school and external speakers in this area have been well received by parents and students.

The co-ordination of SEN is included within the posts of responsibility structure. The SEN co-ordinator meets with the principal on a weekly basis and there is strong evidence of a very well-co-ordinated approach to the delivery of supports to students. Individual learning plans are in place for all students who are in receipt of supports and, while support is provided mainly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, there is a flexibility to the provision that allows the individual learning needs of students to be given priority.

The school operates a broad curriculum in the context of its size and this curriculum is augmented through close co-operation with the neighbouring girls’ school. There is a strong focus on sport as part of the extra-curricular programme and Games is a timetabled subject for all students. There are also high levels of participation in a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular events. In the context of Wellbeing, management and staff should examine the balance between Games and the curricular
subject of Physical Education (PE) and should aim to ensure that a sufficient timetable allowance of at least one double period per week is allocated to PE for all junior-cycle students. This provision should also extend to senior-cycle students.

New subject specifications of the revised Junior Cycle are being implemented but some elements of junior-cycle English are not being delivered; the reason for this was reported to be industrial action.

There has been a large increase in the number of students opting for the TY programme in recent years. Students and parents spoke very highly of the programme and the range of experiences and challenges it offers. The current TY plan is in need of review and development in order to ensure that the operational details, the accreditation system and the curricular aspects are appropriately documented. Also, in order to build capacity and to ensure that the skills of co-ordination are not vested in just one person, a core team of teachers should be established to discuss issues related to TY and LCVP and to collaborate in planning for programmes.

There is a democratically elected student council in place. The work of the council is guided by a constitution, a version of which is available on the school website. Responses to student questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that a majority of students feel they don’t have a say in how things are done in the school. The student council should adopt a lead role in addressing this by developing a strategy to increase its profile in the school.

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.

1.3. Management of facilities

The school buildings and grounds are very well maintained. Significant recent investments, supported by the PA, have brought about considerable improvements in the learning environment in classrooms. A major refurbishment and re-purposing of a disused residence on the property has facilitated the opening of an ASD unit in the school.

An annual health and safety audit is carried out by external contractors commissioned by the school’s trustees. Given that all teachers have been assigned base classrooms, responsibility for individual risk assessments should be delegated to individual teachers over time.

A high level of environmental responsibility is evident in the school. Two green flags have been awarded to the school by An Taisce and work towards a third is ongoing.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of teaching was good or very good in almost all of the lessons observed and was satisfactory in the remainder of lessons. Teachers demonstrated high levels of subject-specific expertise and, in many cases, showed a very good awareness of how learning in their subject is linked to other subjects on the curriculum. In the best lessons, learning environments were fully inclusive and student centred, there was a strong awareness of the value of individual and collaborative tasks for the consolidation of learning and the approach taken was developmental and incremental. In a
small number of lessons, there was a need to create a greater balance between teacher presentation and students’ active engagement with the content of the lesson.

There was high quality short-term planning for lessons in almost all cases. Clear learning intentions were shared with students and additional resources to support student learning were integrated seamlessly. Where learning intentions were used optimally, they were re-visited at the end of lessons for the purpose of recapitulating the lesson content and identifying areas in which further work is required. Such practices should be extended to all lessons.

ICT was used to very good effect in some lessons through the judicious integration of well-chosen visuals, animations and audio content. In other lessons, the potential of ICT to enrich the learning experience could have been harnessed further. There are plans in place to form and eLearning team with the remit of developing an eLearning plan for future ICT integration into teaching and learning. There has already been considerable work undertaken by some teachers in this area and the development of an eLearning strategy is an ideal opportunity to share experiences and learning among teachers.

In most of the lessons observed there was a variety to the assessment modes used. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrated a deep understanding of students’ aptitudes and learning needs and used assessment strategies that built on the strengths of individual students. In such lessons, a variety of strategies to support assessment for learning (AFL) were used including brainstorming, the use of mini-whiteboards and the incorporation of think-pair-share tasks. In other lessons, there was scope to develop practice in relation to AFL. Best practice in questioning was noted where teachers addressed higher-order, differentiated and directed questions to individual students. In some cases, there was an over-reliance on global questioning which resulted in students answering in chorus. Such a questioning strategy makes it difficult for the teacher to assess the progress of individual students and should be avoided.

While there were some very good examples of high-quality written formative feedback given to students in relation to their work, the area of formative feedback is one in which considerable development is required in general. As a starting point, the school’s assessment policy should include expectations in relation to the level and type of formative feedback to be given to students on their work. This, in turn, should lead to the development of subject-specific approaches that should be implemented by all teachers.

The quality of subject plans examined during the evaluation ranged from fair to very good. The best plans included detailed schemes of work in which resources, methodologies and assessment modes were carefully catalogued and tailored to individual strands of the syllabus; a detailed record of teachers continuing professional development (CPD) was retained; analysis of certificate examination results was accompanied by commentary and action planning and the elements of literacy and numeracy associated with the subject were well addressed.

Where plans were in need of considerable development, schemes of work contained only generic approaches to teaching and learning, the analysis of certificate examination results was confined to the recording of data and SSE strategies were not included. It is recommended that all plans reflect whole-school SSE strategies, tailored to the subject as appropriate.

In an effort to develop teachers’ collaborative practice, a majority of teachers in the school have participated in a peer observation project in which each teacher observed a lesson of another teacher and engaged in a subsequent professional discussion in relation to classroom practice. Those involved
spoke very highly of the initiative. A strategy should be put in place to build on the momentum generated by this project and to extend the initiative to include all teachers.

The quality of student learning was good or very good in most of the lessons observed and was satisfactory in the remainder of lessons. In the best lessons, students demonstrated high levels of motivation linked to clear and attainable, yet challenging, learning outcomes. In such lessons, students engaged purposefully and productively in both individual and collaborative activities. In some lessons there was a need to increase the level of challenge by giving students more responsibility for their learning. This could be achieved through increasing the prevalence of higher-order questioning with appropriate wait-time and through the inclusion of extension tasks.

An analysis of students’ performance in the certificate examinations indicates that the uptake of students at higher level is good across all subject areas. Attainment at all levels is good, although there is some evidence that the number of students achieving top grades across a number of subjects is below expectations. An increased focus on upward differentiation should go some way towards addressing this.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Management has made considerable progress in relation to whole-school recommendations from previous evaluations. The last whole-school evaluation in 2009 recommended the development of a strategic plan for future school development. While progress has been made towards the creation of a vision for how the school should move forward, further progress is now required in articulating and progressing this vision using the SSE six-step process.

Teachers, across some subject areas, have made considerable progress towards the implementation of planning recommendations from previous evaluations. The good practices that have been developed should now be shared across all departments.

In relation to teaching and learning, there has been good progress in a number of areas, most notably the use of active learning methodologies and the incorporation into lessons of a broader range of strategies to support AfL. While there has also been good progress in relation to differentiation practices, further work is required in some cases in relation to higher-order questioning and the use of upward differentiation strategies to more fully challenge the more able students. Areas in which considerable progress is still required include the use of ICT in lessons and the use of written formative feedback as a means of further progressing students’ learning.

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

SSE has recently been incorporated into the post-of-responsibility structure. A considerable amount of baseline data has been collected, in both qualitative and quantitative form, from students, parents and staff.

A number of in-class strategies have been developed in the areas of literacy, numeracy and AfL and these strategies were implemented to varying degrees in lessons. Strategies that are currently in use do not have a clear connection to associated learning targets. In formulating future strategies, measureable targets that are based firmly in what the learning benefits for students will be should be
identified. Once these targets have been established, associated strategies that align themselves to these targets should be carefully chosen and should be implemented by all teachers and reflected in subject planning documentation, tailored as appropriate. Once these targets and strategies are in place, the formulation of robust monitoring procedures will become a less onerous task and should yield valuable data to inform future iterations of the SSE cycle.

The school demonstrates very high levels of capacity in most aspects of its operation. In order for this to lead to a very high capacity for school improvement, the further embedding of a whole-school approach across areas such as subject and programme planning, eLearning and SSE is required. The successful development of this whole-school approach combined with a clear, carefully devised strategic plan will be key factors in the successful future development of the school.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the Inspection report. In particular, it welcomes the acknowledgement of the very positive relationships which exist in the school between students, staff, management, parents, Board of Management and trustees.

The report recognises the pastoral leadership and vision of senior management, the emphasis on student care, the focus on positive behaviour and the atmosphere of mutual respect which pervades the school.

The Board welcomes the recognition of the dedication and hard work of the staff, their spirit of collegiality, their positive approach to continuous professional development and the culture of reflection and innovation which is a hallmark of the school.

The report acknowledges the time and energy given by the Board and senior management to improving school facilities over the years.

The Board welcomes the acknowledgement of the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of subject department planning and the increasing use of the new ICT facilities in classroom practice. Given its commitment to school improvement, the Board welcomes the recommendations in relation to school self-evaluation and subject department planning.

As a school in the Edmund Rice tradition, its inclusive nature is very important. The Board welcomes the recognition of the school’s open enrolment policy and its broad and balanced curriculum.

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

The Board of Management is fully committed to implementing the findings and recommendations of the WSE/MLL report.

The Board of Management views the report as an important roadmap to assist the school in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in meeting the needs of its students over the coming years. The Board acknowledges the school’s role in the national drive to improve literacy and numeracy and through a process of self-evaluation, continue to improve all aspects of school life.

The Board has mandated the senior management team, in consultation with staff, students and parents, to prepare a strategic plan which will reflect the recommendations of the report. This work will be assisted by the in-school management team who will have an active role in strategic planning and self-evaluation and by the learning support team who will assist in developing and implementing the school’s literacy and numeracy strategy.

Regarding school self-evaluation, the Board recognises the importance of incremental change and the need to prioritize an achievable set of objectives.

The Board is conscious of the high quality of current subject department planning; nevertheless, it recognises how an emphasis on learning outcomes, action plans and annual reports to the Board will contribute further to school improvement.
The Board recognises the importance of assessment – formative and summative - in student learning and will be giving priority to the development of a whole school assessment policy.

The Board acknowledges the positive role of the school’s engagement with parents and the whole school community. The school will continue to build on the work already commenced which has enhanced the culture of mutual respect and the quality of learning within the school. The Board will continue to support senior management, staff and students in developing their leadership potential so that the school will continue to foster a culture of excellence in teaching and learning.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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