

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Le Chéile Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Hollystown Road Tyrrellstown Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	68083N

Date of Evaluation: 05-12-2019



**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	05-12-2019
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

Le Chéile Secondary School is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school in Dublin 15, catering for a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-denominational student cohort. The school was established in 2014 under the auspices of Le Chéile Schools Trust and has experienced a period of rapid growth. With a current enrolment of 753 students, le Chéile offers the Junior Cycle (JC), optional Transition Year (TY), established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school has a special class for students with autistic spectrum disorders.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is very good; the highly innovative school leaders promote a culture of collaboration and reflective practice.
- The senior management team (SMT) has a clear vision for the future development of the school and is aware of the need to now consolidate whole-school structures to implement this vision.
- The board and SMT have begun to review planning and school improvement processes to reflect the school's transition from a developing phase to an established phase, and have correctly identified priority areas for development, including policy review and the systematic tracking of student attainment.
- The school provides a very broad curriculum that commendably aims to maximise student choice, however the overall timetabled provision for some subjects is not in line with minimum requirements of JC specifications.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good; there is scope to consistently implement formative assessment practices.
- The school's engagement in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, and capacity for improvement is very good.

Recommendations

- School leaders should develop an overarching strategic plan, and ensure that the necessary structures and systems to support planning for improvement are strengthened and implemented consistently; relevant policies should be updated to reflect changes.
- The SMT should rebalance the timetable in JC in line with subject specification, short course and Wellbeing requirements.

- Assistant principals should progress the implementation of the proposed system to track and monitor students' progress, to maximise learner outcomes.
- Teachers should consistently implement formative assessment practices, including provision of written developmental feedback on students' work, and opportunities for students to share their learning in lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

Members of the current and original board and SMT have highly effectively led and managed the development of this school from a green-field site to an innovative centre of learning. They established a clear vision for the future development of the school underpinned by the values of the Le Chéile charter and their school motto "Welcome, Wisdom, Witness". In developing a comprehensive school plan, management undertook a considerable consultation process with relevant stakeholders.

The newly-appointed acting SMT, in place since September 2019, demonstrates very good management and leadership skills. The SMT recognises its role in leading the school from the developmental to the established phase, and is aware of the need to strengthen whole-school structures to implement their vision. Planning processes are evolving to reflect the challenges of a rapidly growing school. The board should now develop an overarching strategic plan to ensure that the necessary structures and systems to support planning for improvement are strengthened. Targets based on available school data should be set, and regularly monitored to ensure that planned actions are implemented consistently.

The SMT organises the planning and implementation of a broad academic curriculum. First-year students are provided with an extensive, year-long subject sampling programme. This benefits students in making informed subject choices. However, the duration of the sampling programme impacts on the overall timetabled provision for some subjects over the three-year cycle. Senior management should consider means to rebalance the timetable in JC, to ensure that all subjects have adequate classroom contact time to fulfil minimum specification requirements. Consideration should be given to shortening the duration of the sampling programme.

Students do not have textbooks in JC and are solely reliant on teacher-created curricular content. This requires considerable work by teachers and it is commendable that subject teams share resources and plan collaboratively to achieve this. However, the quality of this content varies. Given the range of experience of teachers and challenges in planning for new JC specifications, it is recommended that senior management creates a comprehensive system for quality assuring school-created content to ensure consistent experiences and outcomes for students.

Overall, the TY programme is well planned, and offers very good opportunities for independent, student-led learning through a range of innovative learning experiences, such as the school radio station. TY students' access to core subjects is arranged in a flexible manner whereby students themselves decide which core subject they will attend on any given day. This inevitably leads to less class contact time with certain core subjects for some students, and should be kept under review.

Some very good provisions for student care are in place, including weekly care team meetings, Chaplaincy, behaviour support, and a timetabled tutor programme. However, responses to student questionnaires regarding feeling safe and cared for, and being able to talk to an adult in the school if having problems, indicate that there is scope to further develop some care structures such as the role of the tutor. To maximise learning in the short tutorial lessons and to ensure consistent delivery, management should take greater oversight of the programme.

Year heads take charge of a range of areas including student welfare and behaviour, and have begun to implement a system to track attainment for third-year students. Senior management should now implement plans to formalise the tracking system, from first year, using all available student data.

The guidance department has developed a comprehensive whole-school guidance plan outlining the implementation of all aspects of Guidance, and its links with Wellbeing, SPHE and relevant agencies. This is very good practice. There is very good timetabled provision of Guidance in senior cycle. A recent review identified scope to rebalance timetabled guidance provision in JC. As the school grows, consideration should be given to maximising the expertise of the guidance counsellor through class visits and periodic modules.

The school has introduced a broad JC wellbeing programme that encompasses pillar subjects of SPHE and PE, and the *Blue Sky Maker Space* programme. Coding and CSPE are optional. Additionally, a range of initiatives, such as the highly effective induction programme, vertical house system and Angel mentoring system support students' transition from primary school. Overall the programme is effective, but provision for CSPE is not in line with JC requirements. It is positive that a wellbeing policy will be developed. This should be progressed to ensure full compliance with circular letter 0055/2019.

Student attendance is well monitored and good structures are in place to record and report issues with attendance. To build on current strategies, classroom interventions that reward and promote positive behaviour and engagement in learning should be extended. This could include an investigation of students' perceptions of their learning experience in the school.

The quality of provision for students with identified special educational needs (SEN) is very good overall. However, there is significant scope to develop SEN identification processes, particularly for students entering first year with emerging or previously unidentified needs. To ensure early identification of students with undiagnosed additional needs, particularly those not indicated in baseline testing, the SEN co-ordinator could usefully partake in co-teaching core subjects for a few lessons at the start of first year.

SEN support is mainly provided through withdrawal, but grouping of students is not always on the basis of similar needs. The support provided should be aligned to specific needs, and targets should be set to improve learning. The SEN department has introduced co-teaching, and plans to move towards this model on a phased basis.

Some very good structures are in place to support students with SEN including highly effective student support files for first and second-year students with diagnosed needs. Commendably, there is considerable expertise among the SEN core team, who deliver the majority of support. However, a large number of non-specialist teachers are currently timetabled for SEN teaching. To ensure consistency in provision, the size of the team delivering support should be reduced.

Managing the organisation

The board of management meets regularly, is strongly committed to the school and is highly effective. In line with good practice, the board provides an agreed report for stakeholders.

The principal and deputy principal work very well as a team, and the day-to-day running of the school is excellent. It is praiseworthy that, within the school's culture of collaborative review, the principal meets with all teachers annually to discuss their work.

The school building and grounds are very well maintained. Classrooms visited created attractive learning environments through student work, motivational quotes, and word walls supporting student literacy. A whole-school learning environment, including spaces such as the learning plaza, which supports creativity and collaboration is evident throughout.

Leading school development

All mandatory policies have been developed, but many policies are now in need of review to reflect the established phase of the school. This includes the RSE policy to reflect current provision, and the admissions policy to ensure that the inclusive nature of the school is fully reflected.

The code of behaviour outlines expectations of students in order to create a positive atmosphere conducive to learning. Communication regarding student behaviour is shared with parents. A school-devised points system whereby teachers assign comments based on behaviour, accompanied by the gain or loss of points is in operation. Significant resources have been allocated to promote positive behaviour. Good student behaviour was observed by inspectors. Significantly however, data from student questionnaires indicate that issues regarding consistency of approaches and being treated fairly and respectfully, warrants further investigation. Management is aware of the difficulties in ensuring consistency and use of the ladder of referral, and is seeking to address this. This should be progressed as a matter of priority and should include a review of the current points system and an investigation of responses to student questionnaires.

Posts of responsibility were established during the development phase of the school. In line with good practice the principal provides post-holders with clear statements of roles and responsibilities, and annual meetings are held. To support the long-term vision of the school and in line with CL 03/2018, the duties should be reviewed annually. Ideally a greater focus on teaching, learning and student voice, in the context of the meaningful inclusion of a diverse school community with sixty-nine nationalities represented, would inform reviews.

The parents' association is very supportive of the school. Parents are encouraged to participate in school life, including input to relevant policies. The focus group of parents and responses to questionnaires indicated that they feel very happy with the school, and consider that the school is very well run.

Developing leadership capacity

Senior management empowers staff to develop leadership roles. Teachers' willingness to participate in initiatives such as peer collaboration and TL21 has led to regular professional dialogue. School management actively encourages teachers to avail of purposeful continuing professional development (CPD) and to collaborate and share their expertise. This is very good practice.

The school has developed very good links with other schools both local and international, through its sharing of innovative e-learning and teaching approaches. Staff CPD and curricular developments are on the agenda for board meetings. To build on this, school improvement planning should be

incorporated more fully into this discussion. The board should now consider further development of the CPD policy to ensure that selected initiatives support the school's vision for teaching and learning.

The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome, and provides valuable professional benefits for all involved. New staff members are effectively supported by the staff induction programme, the *Droichead* programme and peer collaboration.

The school provides very good opportunities for student leadership through the student council, prefect system and student ambassadors. However, responses from student questionnaires highlight the need to place increased emphasis on students' perceptions about having a say in how things are done. This should be further investigated to ensure that students are aware of opportunities to have their voices heard in a meaningful way.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in lessons observed, with scope for more consistent implementation of formative assessment strategies.

Learner outcomes and experiences

Learning intentions were presented at the outset of all lessons. In most instances they were clearly stated and focussed on what learners should be able to do or know by the end of the lesson. Commendably, in some lessons learning intentions were differentiated to meet the range of learners' needs. This was most effective when linked to success criteria, enhancing students' understanding of what was required to achieve the intended learning. These highly effective approaches should be extended to all lessons.

Active, student-centred and collaborative learning was a key feature of lessons. Very good practice was noted where students worked independently at their own pace, asked questions, demonstrated learner curiosity and shared responsibility for their own learning. This is to be encouraged. While students engaged purposefully with assigned tasks in almost all lessons, in some instances the level of challenge could be increased to deepen learning and engagement for some students. At certain junctures in some lessons, the time assigned to lesson tasks was too long and teacher voice became more central. In those instances, there was scope to rebalance the length of time assigned to the task to optimise learning for students.

Students benefitted from a range of formative assessment strategies in lessons including effective oral formative feedback from teachers, opportunities to self and peer-assess, placemat activities and show-me boards. In line with good practice, learning was reviewed towards the end of most lessons. In some instances there was scope to dedicate more time to this section of the lesson, to provide more meaningful assessment and consolidation of learning, and to encourage students to further verbalise their learning.

A review of student work in copybooks and on the school's online learning platform indicated good examples of teachers' written formative feedback. All teachers should now take a consistent, whole-school approach to the provision of written developmental feedback on students' work.

Some very good questioning strategies were observed in lessons. In the most effective lessons, questions were employed as a strategy to differentiate learning and there was a good balance between open and closed questions.

Le Chéile is a one-to-one device school. Senior management's support for the successful integration of e-learning to support and enhance teaching and learning is to be commended. Effective examples noted in lessons included the display of student responses to questions, use of video clips, and the online platform to share homework and reflect on progress. Students' used tablet devices effectively in lessons to research, share learning, and record materials provided by the teacher.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers prepared well for lessons, and organised useful resources in advance, such as worksheets, visuals, and props to support learning activities.

A very positive teacher-student rapport was a feature of lessons, with students generally on task and classroom routines clearly established. Overall, lessons were well-structured and sequenced. Teachers provided clear and precise explanations and made good references to prior learning. In the best lessons teachers checked students' understanding of instructions and assigned tasks, and the review of prior learning informed subsequent activities.

In almost all lessons, teachers used a good variety of appropriate teaching methodologies and set high expectations for students. Teachers used some good strategies to differentiate learning, including good circulation during lessons to provide individual support. Overall, further attention to differentiation is advised to ensure that the learning needs of all students are met in the most effective manner possible.

Overall, teachers paid good attention to students' literacy skills in lessons, including appropriate focus on keywords, in line with the school's literacy strategy. Given the wide range of baseline literacy skills of students, many of whom do not speak English as their first language, teachers should prioritise the implementation of the literacy strategy. Numeracy strategies were less apparent in lessons. Further development of whole-school numeracy strategies is advised.

Teachers' collective curriculum planning for subjects and programmes is progressing well. Good practice was noted where planning was consistently linked to the school's seven root beliefs. The online platform allows for efficient sharing of resources and a consistent approach to subject planning was noted. As the JC becomes more fully embedded, subject specifications could be further employed to develop subject planning and preparation for resources.

School management provides detailed analysis of student attainment in certificate examinations for the board and all subject departments in order to plan for improved outcomes. The board correctly identified the need to interrogate this data more deeply to inform future planning. Commendably some subject departments have identified factors impacting on attainment and have devised action plans for improvement. Senior management should now oversee the development of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets and the implementation of action plans for improvement by all subject departments to ensure that students are supported appropriately to achieve their potential.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall good progress has been made in recommendations from previous inspections.

Leadership and Management

School management has developed good structures to support the implementation of recommendations from evaluations, including the sharing of previous reports across all subject departments, and the use of recommendations as a basis for SSE. Recommendations regarding the implementation of collaborative review of teaching and learning have been addressed through team-teaching and peer lesson visits. More consistent approaches to recording and monitoring homework have been implemented using the school's online platform as well as journals. Such strategies should now be implemented schoolwide.

Teaching and Learning

Very good progress has been made in opportunities for students to work collaboratively. Good progress has been made in the provision of written formative feedback and in opportunities for students to showcase their work and learning in some subject areas, particularly those that have been part of a previous evaluation. It is very good practice that management encourages the subject department inspected to devise an action plan for the implementation of recommendations. All subject departments should devise plans to implement relevant recommendations, regardless of the subject area, and reports on progress should be presented to the board.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

School leaders are aware of educational developments and have begun to use the SSE process as a means of managing change. Some very good practices are in place to implement the SSE process, including regular meetings of staff teams and administration of questionnaires to seek views of staff and students. In the context of a growing school, expectations of teachers for the implementation of specific classroom strategies, and the targets set, should be clearly communicated to ensure consistent implementation.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has an excellent capacity for improvement. The SMT is proactive, promotes a culture of creativity and collaboration and is aware of the structures needed to bring the school's vision to fruition. Members of the middle-management team are dynamic and enthusiastic and teachers are empowered to take on leadership roles.

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 Le Chéile Secondary School welcomes this WSE-MLL report and congratulates all stakeholders for their hard work and commitment, acknowledged so positively throughout the report. We are delighted that the report evidenced our lived ethos and affirmed our commitment to ensure that all school development is underpinned by the values of the Le Chéile charter and our school motto “Welcome, Wisdom, Witness”.

The Board particularly notes the following findings:

- The very good opportunities for independent, student-led learning through a range of innovative learning experiences.
- The very broad curriculum that aims to maximise student choice.
- The school’s engagement in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and teachers’ willingness to participate in initiatives such as peer collaboration has led to regular professional dialogue.
- The highly effective induction programme, vertical house system and Angel mentoring system which supports students’ transition from primary school.
- The very good quality of provision for students with identified special educational needs.
- The whole-school learning environment, including spaces such as the learning plaza, which supports creativity and collaboration.
- The very good opportunities for student leadership through the student council, prefect system and student ambassadors.
- The very positive teacher-student rapport which was evident in lessons.
- The very affirming responses to the parent questionnaires indicating that they feel very happy with the school and consider it to be very well run.

We appreciate the report’s recognition that members of the current and original Board and SMT have highly effectively led and managed the development of the school from a green-field site to an innovative centre of learning.

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

As recognised in the report Le Chéile has in place some ‘very good practices to implement the self-evaluation process, with excellent capacity for ongoing improvement. The SMT recognises its role in leading the school from a developmental to an established phase and the school’s planning process are evolving to reflect the challenges of a rapidly growing school.’

We will continue to use the SSE process as a means of managing change, broadening the scope of our current SIP as the basis for our developmental work; thus providing the context within which to engage with the inspection recommendations.

The Board of Management in consultation with all stakeholders has formulated a timeline for the review and development of our existing policies, prioritising those we believe require immediate attention. We will continue to progress the work of the Positive Behaviour Committee in reviewing our Code of Behaviour. Our ongoing review and reflections will be guided by the commentary in the report relevant to this area of development.

The Board will work with the SMT in reviewing timetabling provision at Junior Cycle to ameliorate issues around minimum time requirements. Our vision to create an innovative learning environment underpinned by the principles of learning to learn, creativity and innovation, flexibility and choice

will underpin this review. We will endeavour to rebalance our timetable in a way which continues to maximise student choice as was commended in the report.

The embedding of both formative assessment strategies and formative feedback is a key aspect of the school's SSE focus. Our progress in this area is recognised in the report which noted that *'students benefitted from a range of formative assessment strategies in lessons including effective oral formative feedback from teachers, opportunities to self and peer-assess, placemat activities and show-me boards. A review of student work in copybooks and on the school's online learning platform indicated good examples of teachers' written formative feedback'*. The development of an assessment policy has been prioritised in our policy development schedule. We will continue to support a whole-school approach to professional development and capacity building in developing effective, ongoing assessment practice which supports students' learning.

The Board is committed to the development of a system which supports academic tracking and the monitoring of students' progress. In line with circular 0003/2018 the Board of Management has initiated the biennial review of the leadership and management needs and priorities of the school. Through this consultative process we will explore how best, within the leadership and management structures, to implement plans to formalise an effective academic tracking system, from first year, using all available student data.