

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Coláiste Cois Siúire |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Mooncoin Co Kilkenny |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 70620C |

Date of Evaluation: 05-12-2018



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

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.

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.

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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

| Dates of inspection | 03-12-2018 to 05-12-2018 |
|--|---|
| <p>Inspection activities undertaken</p> <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

Coláiste Cois Siúire is a co-educational school under the auspices of Kilkenny Carlow Education and Training Board, with a current enrolment of 142. The school provides the Junior Cycle programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The board, senior management and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to creating an inclusive and positive school community; they provide students with a wide variety of activities and foster a climate of security and wellbeing.
- As a small school the board strives to meet the curricular needs of students, providing a good range of subject options; nevertheless the current curriculum is limited.
- School leadership and management is effective; while the board is committed to school development, its recent focus has been on legislative compliance and day-to-day organisational issues, rather than strategic school development.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good; while very good learning was observed when students were actively engaged in investigative and challenging activities, not all lessons were inquiry-based.
- The board, principal and teachers value partnership with parents and the local community; notwithstanding this, parental involvement is low.
- There is a strong commitment to school improvement and, overall, good progress has been made on previous recommendations; however, a number of more recent teaching, learning and assessment recommendations are not, as yet, embedded as whole-school practices.
- There is currently no Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provided for senior cycle students; at the time of the evaluation no teacher had attended training to deliver a senior cycle RSE programme.

Recommendations

- The senior management team should form a board of studies to review the current curriculum at junior and senior cycle and explore possible Transition Year (TY) programme options in advance of the introduction of TY.
- The board and school community should further develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the future of the school, setting out distinct goals and expectations regarding teaching and learning, enrolment, curriculum, recruitment, and middle leadership roles.
- Teachers should plan lessons with more inquiry based and differentiated activities for students, while further supporting student learning through developmental formative assessment.
- The role of parents as partners in school development should be extended and school management should consult parents on policy formation and curricular reform.
- The DEIS and school improvement team should lead strategies such as whole-school teaching and learning approaches and academic tracking and monitoring systems to improve attainment and progression.
- The board should make provision for a comprehensive RSE programme for all senior cycle students in tandem with supporting a core team of teachers to attend appropriate training.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of school leadership and management is effective.

Leading learning and teaching

The principal and the board of management encourage teachers to develop their learning, teaching, and assessment practices through participation in continuing professional development. All teachers have been supported to attend training for the new Junior Cycle, including subject cluster and whole-school days. Over the past two years, a small number of teachers have participated in *Magenta Principles* training to develop their teaching and learning approaches. Teachers are encouraged to give regular input on learning and teaching at staff meetings and to further utilise the school's online sharing platform as a way to collaborate and share teaching methodologies and resources. To extend the learning further, a team of interested teachers could engage in peer observations of learning and teaching.

School leaders and teachers are committed to creating an inclusive and positive school community through the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities and a popular, well-supported breakfast club. Students also take part in a number of valuable social development and fundraising projects with the local community fostering strong links and increasing their understanding of social issues.

There are effective pastoral care structures and procedures which ensure that students in need are identified and supports initiated. Due to the size of the school, some of these procedures operate on an informal basis. To enhance the current systems, senior management should formalise the weekly meeting of the student support team, establish clear referral systems and recording templates in line with the National Educational Psychological Service *Guidelines for Establishing Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools*.

Whole-school guidance support is effective; students benefit from a valuable range of educational, social and career development activities in line with the continuum of support model. The guidance counsellor works very effectively with internal and external partners as well as providing students with valuable one-to-one support for educational and personal issues. Senior cycle students have weekly guidance lessons which cover a useful range of topics. The guidance department should expand the junior cycle guidance programme by providing a range of guidance-related learning modules. These modules could be included under the new Junior Cycle Wellbeing Framework and identified as early intervention actions in the DEIS plan to further promote progression to further and higher education.

It is commendable that the school was involved in the pilot phase of the new resource allocation model. The new school management team is reviewing use of the resource hours while managing some legacy issues regarding timetabling. Currently, some of the hours are used appropriately to support small group teaching and the withdrawal of students for individual teaching. However, other hours are used to provide students with a range of optional subjects and to support the division of groups for core subjects into ordinary and higher level groupings. When organising the timetable for next year, senior management should plan for additional team-teaching, co-operative teaching, early intervention and support strategies to improve outcomes for students with identified education needs, in line with Circular 0014/2017. Student support files need to be advanced to facilitate effective planning of interventions and tracking of students' progress.

The school is not currently providing all senior cycle students with a RSE programme. Since the evaluation the principal has begun to lead a process to ensure that all senior cycle students receive RSE. The board should oversee the provision of a comprehensive RSE programme for senior cycle students in tandem with supporting a core team of teachers to attend appropriate training.

Managing the organisation

The newly appointed principal and acting deputy principal effectively oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school and communicate regularly and effectively with staff and each other.

The board, principal and staff fulfil their responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security and wellbeing. The buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard, the environment is positive, student work is on display and classrooms are visually stimulating. It is positive to see inspirational role models, both past and current students, visible on the walls of corridors. All classrooms are well-equipped and Wi-Fi is available throughout the school. There is a new digital strategy in the school. A number of teachers acknowledged their need to upskill in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a tool for learning and teaching.

The principal and deputy principal manage the human resources well, seeking to maximise students' learning opportunities by deploying staff appropriately. The newly appointed principal is planning to meet all teachers to discuss their work and ideas for school improvement. This is very good practice. The principal could use this process effectively to explore the variety of teaching skills and interests, identify future training and upskilling needs as part of a strategic plan for new short courses, programmes and subjects.

Leading school development

The current board is committed to developing the school as a positive learning community and some strategic planning has been initiated in this regard. However, recent priorities such as data protection compliance, child safeguarding procedures and supporting the new senior management team have dominated its work. The board and school community should now continue to develop a clear strategic plan for the future of the school, setting out distinct goals and expectations in areas such as teaching and learning, enrolment, curriculum, staffing, staff professional development, and middle management roles and responsibilities.

The board, principal and teachers value partnership with parents, the local community, employers and feeder schools and endeavour to build good relationships. The link with the local feeder school should be strengthened through a range of activities like the planned subject sampling day. Parents are very supportive of the school and feel very welcome. Notwithstanding this, parental involvement and attendance at school events is low. The role of parents as partners in school development should be extended by further encouraging parental participation in school events, policy formation and decision making.

The board and the senior management team are aware of the school's changing needs and seek to respond to them, endeavouring to meet the curricular needs of students by providing a good range of options. However, the current range of subjects and programmes on offer is limited. It is recommended that school management review the current curriculum at both junior and senior cycle. As part of this review optional junior cycle short courses and the structure of the subject option bands should be considered. The board should instigate the establishment of a curricular board of studies to survey students' interests and explore potential subject and programme options.

There is a plan to introduce TY in 2020 for the current second-year students. Students expressed interest in this proposal and welcome it. To ensure its success, a comprehensive TY programme and

plan needs to be developed in keeping with the *Transition Year Programmes Guidelines for Schools* publication. A team of teachers committed to the philosophy, aims and successful implementation of the TY programme should be formed to explore how programmes are delivered in other schools, survey parents and students' interest in optional modules. Time should be formally assigned for the purpose of the effective planning implementation of the. All aspects of curriculum and organisation should be clearly documented and approved by the school management, staff and the board before the programme is implemented.

Developing leadership capacity

The new principal and deputy principal meet on a daily basis and they respond well to pressing responsibilities, particularly in light of their teaching and supervision duties. The principal effectively prioritises and delegates responsibilities by encouraging others to take on leadership roles and take part in committees such as the digital learning group. Distributed leadership should be further progressed by the formation of staff working groups to lead improvement in aspects of teaching, learning, assessment, and subject department planning. The current middle management structure is small due to the size of the school and merits ongoing review to ensure a meaningful middle leadership role for the two post holders. As part of this review school leaders should consider the inclusion of an academic mentoring role to support raising academic attainment and progression of students. This would support the embedding of the role of assistant principals (APs) as leaders of learning

The student council is democratically elected and suitably trained with very good representation from all genders and year groups. It is commendable that the council is supported by a link teacher who performs the role on a voluntary basis. Students meet the board frequently, discuss pertinent issues, and contribute to policy development. This is very good practice. The valuable contribution of the student council could be extended by asking council members to survey the wider student body to discover students' views on teaching, learning, and assessment, as part of their partnership role in the school improvement process.

The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Two teachers are currently on placement in the school. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, students and the teacher education institution. The school provides a supportive mentoring and induction programme together with a helpful induction handbook for all new staff.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Seventeen lessons including four double lessons were observed. These covered a range of core, optional, practical and non-examination subjects in junior and senior cycle. The overall quality of teaching and learning was good.

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of learning in the lessons observed was good. Very good quality learning was observed when students were actively engaged in their lessons and when teachers created a stimulating environment that ensured learning was investigative and challenging. In the significant minority of instances where learner experiences were less than good, teacher instruction prevailed and students had limited opportunities to be productive and to lead their own learning through discovery and inquiry. In these instances, teachers should create opportunities for students to

experience ownership of and responsibility for their own learning and plan for an appropriate balance between teacher input and student inquiry-based activity.

Classroom management was very good overall and interactions between students and teachers were respectful and positive. Student attentiveness and behaviour was exemplary, and they displayed a high level of co-operation with their teachers and with each other. Most students engaged very diligently in classroom tasks and activities.

In the most successful lessons, students were able to connect with lesson topics and readily took the opportunities offered to apply and develop their knowledge and skills. They showed an ability and willingness to engage in activities, to express their own ideas, and to offer a range of responses to questions and solutions to problems. The learning environments created in these lessons should be developed and extended.

Best practice was observed when students experienced effective differentiated approaches. In some instances, greater use of differentiated strategies, including higher-order questioning techniques and individual student attention is recommended to support the learning styles and abilities of all students.

Collaborative learning was a feature of a minority of lessons. Further opportunities for collaborative group tasks should be incorporated into lessons. In a minority of instances the student voice was a strong feature, as students presented their work and articulated their knowledge. Further opportunities for students to role play, debate, question each other and present their work to the class should be incorporated into lessons.

The visual learning environment in almost all classrooms visited was of a high standard. Thematic posters and displays of students work on classroom walls were in evidence. In some classrooms, the group seating arrangement facilitated co-operative learning activities.

In many lessons, students took ownership of and responsibility for their learning. Tasks were appropriately challenging and there was a clear sense among students that they were making progress.

Students demonstrated good subject knowledge, achieved the intended learning of the lesson, and had the opportunity to practise subject-specific and practical skills in some lessons. There was good practice in relation to the use of the target language by teachers and students.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Overall, the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good. When teachers were well prepared for lessons, the materials and resources selected were appropriate to the learning intention, and the sequence of learning activities was well planned. In a few lessons, the materials and methodologies selected had limited interest for students. In these instances, better advance planning for more dynamic resources would have served the learning intention more effectively.

Learning intentions were stated at the outset in some lessons. The most effective practice was noted where the learning intentions were stated in terms of learning to be attained by the end of the lesson, and not merely lesson content. Further good practice was noted where the learning intentions were revisited with appropriate student input. All teachers should plan to allow sufficient time for students to actively revisit learning intentions at the conclusion of lessons. In some cases, a sense of purpose and direction was established in other ways, such as clear instructions about practical tasks. The use of success criteria should be developed by all teachers so that students are more aware of their strengths and of the areas they need to develop.

In the most successful lessons, teachers' clear explanation of topics, demonstration of practical skills, effective management and monitoring of classroom tasks, and obvious enthusiasm and advocacy for

their subjects greatly supported student learning. Praiseworthy practice was observed in a few lessons where, in promoting learner autonomy, teachers became enablers of highly effective student learning.

In some lessons, resources and activities provided students with sufficient challenge to extend their learning and enough support to enable them to work independently of the teacher. This very good balance of challenge and support was observed in a number of practical and academic subjects and should be extended in order to enhance the student learning experiences. However, in a significant minority of lessons, activities lacked the appropriate level of challenge and scope for meaningful student engagement. In some cases, there was excessive use of teacher presentations and student note taking. Further development by teachers of active and inquiry-based learning is recommended.

Effective questioning practice was noted in lessons where teachers asked directed rather than global questions, where questions were differentiated and where students were encouraged to explain their responses. To build on this effective practice, all teachers should use questioning as a means of assessing learning and include higher-order questioning to extend students' understanding.

Some teachers provided developmental formative written feedback on homework and student assignments and this activity is valued by students. There is substantial scope to further develop and embed assessment practices that assist students to build on their capabilities and address areas where they need to improve.

Some subject department plans were of good quality, while many required substantial development in order to support teacher collaborative and reflective practice. It is recommended that teachers of Junior Cycle access Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) resources to develop collaborative planning. In the best plans reviewed, reflective practice was integrated into planning, and records of meetings and the plans created showed very good awareness of curriculum change and what it entails.

Teachers made good efforts to ensure that students understood and used subject-specific keywords and language in some lessons. This practice should be extended. Further opportunities for numeracy development in lessons is required. ICT was successfully integrated into many lessons and the audio visual clips, presentations and visuals selected were well utilised to enhance learning.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall there has been good progress made on previous recommendations with many successfully addressed; however, a number of teaching, learning and assessment recommendations still require further action to become whole-school practices.

Leadership and Management

DEIS planning for the next three-year cycle has begun with senior management effectively leading a valuable review of the previous plan. Some areas already identified for development are the raising of student attainment together with improved monitoring of initiatives. The DEIS and school improvement team should lead strategies to support improved attainment and progression through an academic tracking and monitoring system.

Previous management recommendations regarding frequency of board and middle leadership meetings, provision of Physical Education for all students, and the establishment of a student council, have been successfully addressed.

Teaching and Learning

Senior management has organised a series of valuable whole-school teaching and learning training days covering areas such as assessment for and of learning, and differentiation. While use of these strategies was evident in some lessons, formative assessment and differentiation practices are not fully embedded across the school.

It was observed that students and teachers were effectively using the target language in both French and Irish lessons.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

There is a strong commitment to the practice of school self-evaluation (SSE) with school leaders and teachers effectively engaging in school improvement. The key challenge lies in developing and embedding whole-school learning, teaching and assessment practices such as differentiation. All subject departments should begin by developing common approaches to planning, using appropriate templates in line with the new Junior Cycle, together with incorporating the school's identified SSE learning, teaching, and assessment strategies.

The previous improvement plan included targets which were too broad and as a result it was difficult for teachers to measure progress. The school improvement team should set meaningful, specific and measurable goals so teachers can effectively evaluate progress.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

Overall capacity for school improvement is good. Strengths include enthusiastic new senior and middle management teams, motivated teachers, a supportive parent and student body and a committed board.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Coláiste Cois Siúire welcomes this positive and affirming WSE-MLL report which identifies many of the school's key strengths:

- Quality of teaching and learning is good and very good
- Day-to-day running of school is effective with a strong commitment to school improvement
- Students experience is one of an inclusive and positive school community with a wide range of extra-curricular activities and student supports
- Student involvement in school development is recognised as highly commendable
- A climate of security and wellbeing is created by all stakeholders with valued partnerships evident
- School building and grounds maintained to a high standard with visually stimulating and well-resourced classrooms observed
- Strong support of parents with an active Parents' Association
- Effective engagement in school improvement with enthusiastic new senior and middle management teams, motivated teachers and a committed Board.
- Good progress has been made on recommendations from previous inspections showing a commitment to working with the inspectorate towards school improvement

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 BOM welcomes the recommendations made in the report. All stakeholders have already begun the process of implementing these recommendations as part of our continuing journey of striving for excellence together.

- All senior cycle students have engaged with their RSE programme fully in January 2019. Staff members have attended additional CPD in this area and a review of the RSE policy by a core team is underway
- The Principal and Programme Coordinator have begun the process of planning for our inaugural TY programme, beginning in September 2020
- A review of the current curricular offering has taken place and a broader junior cycle curriculum will be offered for our 2019 cohort
- The roles of middle management have been reviewed. An AP2 was added to the senior management team in February 2019
- Additional teachers have enthusiastically engaged in *Magenta Principles* training as we further- develop our focus on strengthening our learning-centred environment
- A schedule for policy review has been implemented and the Board are leading the process of involving all stakeholders in policy amendments
- The school digital learning framework has been completed with teachers and students more empowered to effectively integrate digital learning methodologies into their teaching, learning and assessment through a BYOD model
- A core DEIS team has led an SSE process of review and a new DEIS plan 2019-2022 is in place

- The Board of Management has committed to leading a process of strategic review and planning before it completes its duties this academic year.

Based on the many positive findings in the report, our stakeholders will:

- **Continue** to engage with meaningful CPD, collaboration and collegiality build capacity in our learning centred environment
- **Further** utilise our SSE model to chart the progression of our DEIS targets
- **Strengthen** our Digital Learning Framework and increase opportunities for effective integration of digital learning methodologies in our 21st-century classrooms
- **Lead** the process of strategic planning at Board level, taking into account the views of all stakeholders
- **Implement** changes to our merit system and foster additional restorative practices to reinforce the overwhelmingly positive sense of community elicited by the report.

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; |