

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Farnan's Post Primary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Prosperous Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70720G

Date of Evaluation: 06-12-2018



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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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 5 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	04-06 December 2018
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

St.Farnan's Post-Primary School is a co-educational second-level school operating under the auspices of Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. All curricular programmes including an optional Transition Year (TY) are offered. Overall post-primary student numbers have declined in recent years to 447.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of school leadership and management is less than satisfactory; there are weaknesses in key areas, particularly in the systems that would support a DEIS school.
- The principal operates an open-door policy and carries out pastoral duties in a supportive manner; there is scope to enhance the principal's leadership role.
- An inclusive ethos is evident in the school through positive staff-student interactions, a welcoming environment for parents, and the addition of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Moderate Learning (MLU) units; however, special educational needs (SEN) provision requires significant development.
- Staff indicated a strong understanding of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*; the records of the last three board of management meetings, however, did not include a child protection oversight report as per the requirements of these procedures.
- A broad curriculum is provided in the school; some aspects of curricular provision such as planning and timetabling require further improvement.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons; in a small number of lessons, the quality of some areas of practice was satisfactory.
- The current DEIS plan is incomplete and is missing the key strands of attendance, retention and attainment; however, very positive progress has taken place recently in DEIS action planning.

Recommendations

- The board should develop and strengthen its governance role by scheduling regular board meetings, and overseeing the development of effective DEIS planning, policy development, and the implementation of recommendations arising out of inspection reports.
- The principal should take a more proactive role in the promotion of high-quality teaching and learning and a school improvement agenda.

- The SEN department should work with school management to conduct a thorough review of current SEN provision.
- Board meetings should record a child protection oversight report that meets the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017*.
- Senior management (SMT) should ensure that aspects of curricular provision, such as planning and timetabling, are reviewed and developed in line with good practice guidelines.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of school leadership and management is less than satisfactory.

Leading learning and teaching

The board has not met for a sufficient number of meetings over the last academic year; this lack of meetings has impacted on its oversight role in respect of teaching and learning and overall governance in the school.

A broad curriculum is in place, with efforts made to meet the needs of students through recent additions such as Physics and Agricultural Science. It would be worthwhile to review the outcomes of such additions, both in terms of uptake and attainment, at some future point.

Timetabling of subjects was mostly good and appropriate time is allocated to subjects in line with requirements. There are, however, areas for development in the programmes available in the school. For example, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) students should be provided with a minimum of twenty-eight hours of weekly instruction, in line with Circular letter M29/95. Management should also ensure that the integrity of the school year for TY students is upheld, in line with Circular letter M1/00.

A discrete class group of Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is created annually from second year onwards, with a small cohort of students identified to participate in the programme. The planned review of the JCSP programme is welcome and should allow students to be further integrated into core subjects with their peers. JCSP students do not currently sit examinations in CSPE or Science. In the context of junior cycle reform, such practices should be reviewed to ensure compliance with Circular letter 0079/2018.

It is good practice that the LCA programme was recently reviewed, with specialisms updated to support student learning. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) was introduced in 2017. The optional TY programme was reintroduced and, in general, one class group of students is accommodated each year. Going forward, it is suggested that all programmes should be reviewed through a systematic tracking of student progress and feedback to inform ongoing improvements.

The overall quality of programme planning varied. No succinct programme for TY was presented during the evaluation. In order to ensure the best possible outcomes for TY students, the development of a comprehensive overall plan for TY should be undertaken as a priority, in line with circular letter M01/00. It is positive that TY students have the opportunity to study Italian as a modern foreign language; however, Italian is provided as a substitute for the language option students followed at junior cycle. This arrangement should be reviewed in order to ensure continuity in provision and to strengthen students' knowledge of the language followed throughout junior and senior cycle. Where possible, Italian could be offered in addition to the language studied at junior cycle.

The school provides placements for student teachers. 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.

There has been a significant changeover in the teaching staff in recent years; SMT oversee the induction of new teachers through an initial meeting and the provision of a staff manual. New staff can also avail of support in the form of peer mentoring and Droichead, as well as informal supports from established colleagues. Teacher questionnaire responses, however, indicate that additional support is advised for staff who are new to the school.

The school benefits from the services of Guidance Counsellors, the School Completion Programme (SCP) and the home-school-community liaison (HSCL). Care team meetings take place weekly and are facilitated by SMT. Guidance features on the student timetables for senior cycle year groups. It would be useful if further opportunities for the Guidance team to meet periodically with junior cycle, TY and LCVP class groupings could be provided.

The school prides itself on being a school for the community, evident in the addition of the ASD and MLU units, as well as the welcoming open nature of admissions to the school. SEN support models in operation in the school include one-to-one tuition, co-teaching and small class groupings, all of which support student learning. More generally, however, SEN provision within the school requires review in order to reflect the advice provided in the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2017)* and Circular letter 0014/2017. This review should examine the use of SEN hours to support optional subjects, Guidance provision, the effectiveness of having a significant number of teachers involved in SEN delivery, and the absence of a core team or formalised meeting times. As a priority, a SEN policy needs to be formulated, in line with these guidelines. The review should also assist in developing the structures needed to support the effective delivery of SEN provision.

Managing the organisation

The governance role of the board of management requires significant improvement. Minutes of the last five board meetings show that the board met for less than the minimum requirements and that there was also a significant time lag between meetings. The board should set out an appropriate annual schedule of meetings to ensure that it complies with the requirement to meet at least five times during the school year.

Policy ratification and disciplinary issues are the main items recorded as items of discussion at board meetings. Minutes show that there is significant scope to improve the board's oversight of many other aspects of school life, including DEIS planning and policy development, the promotion of high-quality teaching and learning, and the monitoring of student outcomes and achievement.

An agreed report should be formalised and provided to staff following board meetings, as responses from the teacher questionnaires indicated that there is a need to keep teachers better informed about the board's leadership and management role.

The SMT manage the school on a day-to-day basis. Since the appointment of the principal in 2012, ongoing changes at deputy principal level have taken place. The SMT share many duties and, going forward, it would be useful for them to further delineate their respective roles.

The principal operates an open door policy and carries out pastoral duties in a supportive manner. The principal's leadership role, however, requires development so that more effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's developmental priorities in leading learning and the school improvement agenda can be progressed in a more systematic manner. It is recommended that the SMT develop clear plans that will support the improvements needed in the school.

Middle management comprises of assistant principal post-holders and a number of new posts are due to be filled. Overall, duties are carried out diligently, effectively, and in a number of instances, post-holders take on additional roles to support management. Continued review and development of the posts of responsibility should ensure that structures are further developed to support teaching and learning.

The school invests significant resources, in terms of personnel and funding, to promote attendance. These resources include those provided through DEIS, SCP and the HSCL. There is evidence that current strategies will need to be reviewed to support improvements. Retention in senior cycle should also be monitored more carefully to support overall student outcomes. Overall attendance data reviewed indicated concerning trends for some class groups, including the JCSP and LCA classes. During lesson observations, sporadic attendance was noted among some senior cycle year groups, with concerns noted particularly among students in LCA and JCSP classes. As such poor attendance impacts negatively on student learning and can contribute to poor student behaviour, the current system of monitoring attendance within the school needs to be improved. For example, at present, not all teachers have access to the online systems and thus the timeliness with which accurate data is generated is not optimal.

Senior management have engaged the services of the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and established a Positive Behaviour Team. However, significant concern was raised by teachers regarding the consistent implementation of the code of behaviour and, more generally, that whole-school policies do not always inform day-to-day life in the school. It is timely that the code of behaviour, and its implementation, be reviewed in light of these findings in order to promote and support positive behaviour.

The Admissions policy is generally open, but references to admission in certain cases being dependant on the provision of resources from the Department of Education and Skills, should be removed.

While acknowledging the difficulties of maintaining an older school building, there is scope to improve the physical environment in some classrooms, where for example, broken furniture was noted. A health and safety statement prepared in 2016 should be updated and an audit of all equipment undertaken to identify the ongoing need for repairs. More regular fire and evacuation checks should also take place.

The provision of information and communications technology (ICT) resources needs to be enhanced, to support, for example, teaching and learning. Many teachers used their own personal laptops or tablets to support teaching and learning and to input student class attendance. The provision of high-quality ICT resources and the use of ICT to support student learning would be greatly supported by the development of a whole-school ICT plan, in line with Circular 0011/2018.

Leading school development

The board, school management and staff share a common vision to improve student attainment and increase student numbers in the school; an action plan to achieve these goals has yet to be realised. In addition, priorities identified included the desire to encourage and support staff CPD and to promote best practice in teaching and learning.

Parents interviewed during the evaluation were supportive of the school and parent questionnaire responses indicated that they felt welcome in the school. Parental involvement in policy review takes place and, more recently, they were involved in the introduction of a new school uniform. Courses are arranged by the HSCL co-ordinator to assist parents to support their children in the school.

Links with feeder primary schools include regular visits prior to enrolment and a recent STEM initiative. It is good practice that links are also established with local business for work experience and with third level institutions.

Developing leadership capacity

SMT have engaged in CPD, for example, the deputy principal has trained in Instructional Leadership. SMT have also attended a number of in-service events and the principal acknowledged the need to attend more CPD in order to keep abreast of relevant changes within the educational landscape. At present, the deputy principal is responsible for junior cycle co-ordination within the school. It is suggested that this role be further devolved, in order to develop leadership capacity and to allow SMT to focus on other areas for development.

It is commendable that a number of staff have engaged in CPD to develop leadership capacity and support teaching and learning in areas such as instructional leadership, Droichead, TL21 and more recently at Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support services. However, a coordinated approach to whole-school CPD is recommended so that greater consistency in effective teaching strategies to support overall student outcomes can be implemented.

It is good practice that staff teams and working groups have been delegated responsibility to lead development in key areas, such as DEIS action planning. Independent of the post structure, staff volunteerism is also evident in areas such as leading subject co-ordination, as tutors and in programme co-ordination.

Student leadership opportunities include the prefect system and the students' council. The students' council is democratically elected; however members should receive training to support them make the best possible use of the opportunity to participate in the council.

A range of extra and co-curricular activities is provided in the school, all of which is supported and co-ordinated by staff. This provision is commendable and impacts positively on the student experience by broadening their opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the majority of lessons; in a small number of lessons, the quality of some areas of practice was satisfactory.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In many lessons learning intentions were presented at the outset. In the best lessons this provided a clear focus what specific learning was to be achieved by the end of the lesson. In some lessons, the focus was on the content to be delivered, rather than student achievement of specific learning outcomes. There is, therefore, some scope to set clear learning intentions in order to establish students' understanding and consolidate learning.

The most effective lessons were well planned and structured, with activities successfully used to progress student learning, and there was a very good balance between the teacher and student input. Positive teacher-student rapport was a feature of all lessons.

Opportunities for student to work collaboratively featured in most lessons. This practice was particularly effective when tasks assigned were structured with clear learning outcomes, allowing for a subsequent plenary session. In some lessons, while active learning took place, a review of the effectiveness of the tasks assigned was advised, with the need to differentiate tasks emerging as an area for attention. Classroom seating arrangements were noted to be traditional in most instances; this should be reviewed in order to further promote optimal conditions for active learning.

In the best lessons, teachers used a combination of global and targeted individual questions. This ensured that students were consistently on task. In lessons where teachers used global questions, this resulted in some students remaining passive. A greater balance in the use of questioning strategies, and increasing the wait time to ensure that students remain on task, is recommended in these lessons. Questioning used by teachers generally required students to recount learning from previous lessons. There is scope for greater use of more challenging questions that deepen students' understanding while probing to check learning.

Some very good examples of students receiving oral formative feedback was observed and to maximise the benefits of such feedback, students should be encouraged to record suggestions given by teachers and to follow up on improving their work. In general, there is scope for a more consistent whole-school approach to correcting copies, through the provision of formative feedback as a means of encouraging students to reflect on and to improve the quality of their written work.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Very good individual preparation for lessons was noted in terms of teaching resources including worksheets and visuals. There is some scope to further extend the level of challenge to benefit students within lessons.

Good attention to student literacy skills was noted in some lessons including, appropriate care to keywords and spelling. Students in a small number of lessons were given opportunities to consult with dictionaries to check the definition for a word. JCSP keyword posters featured in a JCSP classroom. In many specialist rooms, and some classrooms, there were displays of students' work and commercially sourced materials also on display.

Homework was assigned in most lessons, however, a review of students' journals indicates that there is a sporadic recording of such work. Homework assigned generally reinforced the learning that took place in the lessons. There is some scope to provide more differentiated homework that challenges the learner.

Opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively are facilitated. In addition, time at staff meetings is used to allow teachers to share practices that they have engaged with through attendance at initiatives, including TL21 and Instructional leadership. Further sharing of teaching strategies at a whole-staff level, including for example further enhancement of active methodologies, is advised.

A range of subject plans were reviewed. While some good practice was observed in plans, others were overly focused on textbooks, with some developed on obsolete syllabus or specification material. All subject departments should ensure that, going forward, planning is developed in line with current syllabus specifications and syllabuses.

School management provides detailed analysis of student attainment, prepared externally. Overall, there are concerns in relation to student attainment. It is recommended that each subject department develop targets for attainment that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART), that a longitudinal approach to the data is undertaken, and that it is linked to DEIS planning. Senior management should meet convenors of subject departments annually to discuss action plans for improvement and to monitor improvements.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

A number of inspections have taken place in the school recently including LCA (2017); Mathematics (2015 and 2014), Irish (2012, and a follow-through evaluation in 2015) and a WSE-MLL (2011).

Leadership and Management

Less than satisfactory progress has been made with many of the recommendations arising from previous inspection reports, particularly with reference to the board and many appear again in this report.

Teaching and Learning

Overall, some good progress has been achieved in relation to previous teaching and learning recommendations. A review of the LCA programme resulted in a change of the specialisms offered. Formative assessment strategies have been implemented including the use of formative written feedback however, overall progress has been inconsistent. There is further and ongoing scope to improve planning of improved learning attainment within subject department plans.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The current DEIS plan is incomplete and is missing the key strands of attendance, retention and attainment. SMART targets have not been identified and the actions to improve outcomes are too generic and some were not evident in the operation of the school. There is no evidence in board minutes relating to the board monitoring and reviewing the DEIS action plan.

The most recent work in the preparation of a future DEIS plan, from 2019-2022, is acknowledged and is of a very good standard. A core DEIS team has been established, with staff taking on key roles in the gathering and collation of baseline data that should inform the development of SMART targets. However, the board is reminded of its responsibility in overseeing and ratifying the DEIS plan.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

The board has a limited role in strategically leading school development and should provide greater oversight and more effective leadership to the school. The board should be more closely involved in overseeing the development and implementation of the DEIS plan and receive regular updates about progress in each of the strands. Overall, improvements in attendance, linked to student attainment, are key areas for improvement within the school. The SMT should set aside time for formal strategic planning in order to progress overall school improvement.

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 welcomes the recent report on our WSE/MLL. The Board is particularly pleased with the observation that Teaching and Learning was good to very good. The Board is proud of the fact that St. Farnan's is an inclusive school which provides both an ASD unit and a Moderate Learning Unit. The Board highlights the number of changes in the Leadership personnel of the school over the recent past and looks forward to a period of stability where it can address the recommendations in the report.

The Board would also like to highlight the difficulty in maintaining such an old building and is happy to be on the building list for a new school.

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

The school leadership team has developed and presented to the Board of Management an Action Plan to address the recommendations in the report. Key actions and responses include:

- The school's DEIS plan is now completed and will shortly be presented to the board for approval.
- The Board has put in place a schedule of meetings for the remainder of the Board's term.
- The Board has prepared and made available an agreed report for its most recent meetings. This practice will continue for all future meetings of the Board.
- A report to the Board of subject uptake and attainment is being prepared and will be presented to the September meeting of the Board.
- A Review of school programmes is underway. One objective of this review is to identify opportunities of the closer integration of JCSP Students.
- As part of our recent review of Leadership and Management structures it is proposed to establish a Programme Coordinator and Special Needs Coordinator.
- A review of Special Education hours is currently under way to ensure that this resource is used effectively and within guidelines.
- The school's ICT Grant will be used to purchase additional computing devices for teaching staff.
- A teacher survey has been conducted, to identify priority issues for staff. A suggestion box was also placed in the staffroom during the period of time that the survey was conducted.
- The findings from the survey and suggestion box have been presented to staff and a number of priority actions have been identified.
- Recommendations in relation to LCA and TY class contact time will be addressed in the 2019/2020 timetable.
- Student Attendance will continue to be monitored on a daily basis with the assistance of our Tracking Secretary. An afternoon roll call will commence in September 2019.
- The reconfiguration of classroom learning spaces will continue to be reviewed and supported. The Board will continue to support staff in taking part in CPD such as TL21 and Instructional Leadership to promote best practice in Teaching and Learning.
- School support staff have been requested to undertake a survey of classroom furniture to ensure their fitness for purpose.
- School leadership team will continue to engage with KWETB to seek support and guidance in the implementation of these recommendations.