

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

School name	Coláiste an Chraoibhín
School address	Duntaheen Road Fermoy Co Cork
Roll number	70990M

Date of Evaluation: 14-11-2019



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	12, 13, and 14 November 2019
Inspection activities undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with Board of Management• Meetings with principal and deputy principals• Meetings with key staff• Review of relevant documents• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with parents• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Coláiste an Chraoibhín is a co-educational, multi-denominational post-primary school established in Fermoy since 1987. The school is under the auspices of Cork Education and Training Board (ETB). It offers the full range of curricular programmes, including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school has a current enrolment of 861 students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The outgoing board of management, together with senior management, has provided very good leadership and management of the school. However, no register of policies has been maintained by the board during its term.
- The school offers the full range of curricular programmes including the Junior Cycle School Programme (JCSP); however, stand-alone JCSP class groups have been formed using a part of the Special Educational Teaching (SET) allocation.
- The quality of support and care for students is very good, but the structures currently in place may not be sustainable, due to the rapid increase in student numbers.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was consistently good.
- Recommendations arising from previous evaluations have been implemented.
- The school's engagement with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process through its work on DEIS planning is very good, and the school shows a very good capacity for improvement.

Recommendations

- The incoming board of management should ensure that a policy and legislative checklist is completed annually, as an internal record of its policy development and review process.
- The use of the SET resources should be reviewed to ensure that in accordance with Circular 14/2017, the allocation is not used for mainstream subject teaching, including the formation of stand-alone class groups such as the JCSP classes.

- In the context of the school's increased enrolment, the efficacy and sustainability of the year head and special educational needs (SEN) structures, as well as existing roles under the posts of responsibility system, should be reviewed.
- The board of management should ensure that the SSE summary report and school improvement plan are made available to the school community annually.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of school leadership and management is very good.

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership of learning and teaching is very good. A recently-expanded senior leadership team provides valuable leadership and management of the school. The team promotes a caring and inclusive school culture based on mutual respect, and demonstrates an openness to new ideas, and to taking on initiatives to support students in all aspects of their learning and development. The team's vision is to continue to build on the school's academic achievements and "not to stand still." The leadership and commitment of the team is very evident in their work, at the start of the school year, in ensuring a smooth transition for staff and students to the newly completed extension.

The school offers the full range of curricular programmes, including the Junior Cycle School Programme (JCSP). Students are able to choose from a wide range of subjects, and a subject-sampling programme in first year allows students to be well informed when subsequently selecting their option subjects. The school has increased the range of subjects on offer, and has introduced Coding as a short course taken by all students at Junior Cycle. In senior cycle, the school is part of the phased introduction of Leaving Certificate Computer Science, and it plans to offer Leaving Certificate Physical Education as an option in the future.

Class groups are banded throughout junior cycle, and a distinct JCSP class comprising of a small group of students is formed in each year. Some very positive cross-curricular approaches to learning are used successfully as part of the JCSP programme, such as the Make a Book initiative, and projects targeting literacy, numeracy, and peer mentoring. Nevertheless, the school should review the practice of a separate JCSP class, as the JCSP is primarily a social inclusion programme. The small number of students in these class groups may impact on the students' social development. In addition, some of the Special Educational Teaching (SET) allocation is currently utilised to facilitate the formation of these class groups, and this is not in line with Circular 0014/2017. Under the terms of the circular, the additional teaching resources provided for special educational needs may not be used for mainstream subject teaching, or to reduce the pupil teacher ratio in mainstream classes. This matter needs to be addressed by school management as a matter of priority.

Very effective work is evident in the organisation of the senior cycle programmes. The Transition Year programme provides students with a well-planned and interesting series of modules, in addition to opportunities for subject-sampling prior to selecting subjects for the Leaving Certificate. A well-organised Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and a Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme are also available to students.

Policies are in place and are fully implemented for Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE), and for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). However, in the context of the responses of some

parents to the questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation, consideration should be given to strengthening communication with parents with regard to the delivery of the RSE programme.

The quality of care for students is very good and there is a clear concern for students and their welfare. The care structures in place include the year head and care teams, who meet with senior management on a weekly basis. The school also benefits from the work of the guidance counsellors, the behaviour for learning teacher, and the contribution of the home school community liaison (HSCL) teacher in ensuring the best outcomes for students. Their work is complemented by inputs and interventions from external agencies, as well as through initiatives and programmes within the school. However, in the context of the school's increased enrolment, the efficacy of the current year head structure, and the sustainability of existing roles under the posts of responsibility system, should be reviewed.

Student wellbeing is promoted through a programme of events throughout the year such as health week. An innovative approach has been taken to the use of the allocation of time for Wellbeing through the provision of a few minutes for reflection at the start of each day. The introduction of a quotation for the day offers potential for meaningful student discussion, but given the short time available, the practice should be reviewed by students and teachers at the end of the year.

Very good measures are in place to facilitate the transfer of students from primary school to second-level, including visits to primary schools, the annual Open Night, and an induction day. It is very positive that the use of standardised assessments to support the transfer of students has been introduced. The findings arising from these assessments will allow for effective student tracking, and for the school to meet the emerging needs of its students, whether academic or affective.

The quality of the support for students with special educational needs (SEN) is very good, and reflects the school's commitment to inclusion. A very effective and experienced SEN team is in place under the leadership of the SEN co-ordinator. The well-qualified team members work in conjunction with senior management and key staff, to meet the diverse and often complex needs of the student body, including the students in the new Learning Hub. The valuable contribution of the special educational needs assistants (SNAs) is also recognised. Department planning is good, and includes documentation mapping the ways in which SEN provision aligns with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) continuum of support for students. Planning is also ongoing for the Level Two Learning Programme (L2LP) for Junior Cycle, as part of the NEPS "support for some" approach. A high number of staff are involved in the provision of resource, either through withdrawal of students for additional help, or through team-teaching. In light of the level of work involved in the assessment and monitoring of students, as well as in supporting both the students and the teachers involved, the current SEN department structures should be re-examined in order to ensure sustainability, and the optimal use of resources, into the future.

Managing the organisation

Management of the school is good. The school has benefitted from the commitment and leadership provided by its most recent board of management. The board was properly constituted, and began its three-year term in October 2016. However, at the time of the evaluation, the school was without a board of management as new members had still to be nominated.

The outgoing board was committed to the development of the school and to the provision of a quality learning environment. During its tenure, its key priority was ensuring the construction of the new extension, as well as dealing with the many consequences that arose from the unforeseen delays in its completion. In tandem with the delays in completing the building project, the school has undergone a rapid and sustained increase in student numbers. As a result, an issue that has emerged in the past year has been the challenge for staff and students of dealing with a significant level of overcrowding within the main building. The decision has therefore been taken by the board, to place

a cap on student enrolment in the future. As a result of this decision, the school's admissions policy should be reviewed in order to reflect the change in procedures.

The board was aware of its statutory responsibilities; the *Child Protection Procedures* were adopted, and Anti-bullying procedures were put in place. While a small number of policies were drafted or reviewed during the board's term, no register or checklist of policies was maintained. The new board should ensure that a policy and legislative checklist is completed annually, as an internal record of its policy development and review process.

A comprehensive code of behaviour is in place, and was reviewed by the board of management during its term. However, in light of the recent move to a much larger building, as well as student responses to the questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation, relevant aspects of the code of behaviour should be reviewed, so as to reflect the move to the spacious new extension. This review might also include the development by students of their own, shorter, "student friendly" version of the code of behaviour.

The work undertaken to manage the school's existing facilities under challenging circumstances in the past few years is commendable. The new extension offers a range of additional specialist rooms and classrooms, as well as enhanced sport and leisure facilities. A Health and Safety Statement has been developed, and is currently being finalised to incorporate the new building. The proposed updating of facilities in the main building will further improve the school campus.

The school regularly 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, and the teacher education institution.

Leading school development

Leadership of school development is very good, and the management team has been pro-active in seeking to respond to emerging needs within the school community. It is expected that the new board will also contribute to the areas for development already identified.

A parents' association is in place, which meets regularly. There are good systems of communication in place between the association and senior management, with reports provided by the principal as well as the HSEL teacher, who works to ensure strong links between the school and the parent body. Information is communicated to parents by means of text messages, letters, and through the student journal. The enhanced possibilities for communication with the school community offered by the school website should be explored.

Links with the wider community are also very strong, and it is positive to note the support for the nearby Cope Foundation, and the opportunities for collaboration afforded to the foundation by the school.

The findings from the student and teacher questionnaires reveal that access to and use of digital technologies is good, and should further improve as the systems in the extension continue to come on stream.

Developing leadership capacity

The development of leadership capacity is good. In addition to the weekly meetings of a number of teams, members of staff are also involved in collaboration in particular areas, and have taken on leadership roles. Interest in teacher professional development in the new Junior Cycle has led to the creation of "teach meets" or teacher meetings to allow for ongoing discussion of teaching and learning. A notable example of leadership within the school is the involvement of staff in a wide

range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. The commitment of staff in facilitating these activities is acknowledged.

An active and interested student council is in place, and has regular meetings with support from a liaison teacher and the Deputy Principal. Students are involved in a range of initiatives such as fund raising, and have plans to introduce a debating club. The members of the council are positive about the level of care and support that they experience in the school. However, findings from the student questionnaires completed as part of the evaluation suggest that student voice is an area for further development. It is suggested that formal links between the council and the board of management should be developed in order to highlight communication and the importance of student voice in the school. The provision of a notice board where the role and activities of the council could be promoted is also suggested.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was consistently good. A number of instances of very high quality practice were also observed.

Learner outcomes and experiences

During the evaluation, the inspectors visited lessons across the range of subjects and curricular programmes offered in the school.

The quality of learner outcomes and experiences was good overall. A feature of lessons was the very good relationship between students and teachers, and this impacted positively on students' motivation and their application to their work.

Many lessons featured effective or highly effective practice in areas such as the use of learning intentions, and the provision of opportunities for students to work collaboratively. Students were clearly familiar with this approach to learning, and demonstrated high levels of engagement when working in pairs or small groups. In their responses to the questionnaires, a high percentage of students agreed that they get opportunities to work together with other students. Where very good practice was observed in a small number of lessons, there was a clear focus on meaningful engagement by students in a variety of tasks, and the learning environment was enhanced through the use of both planned and unplanned opportunities for collaboration, thus underlining a very positive student-centred approach. Where areas for development were identified, providing students with opportunities to compile and present the findings from their collaboration is suggested, as well as the use of a more varied classroom layout. A move away from the traditional layout would support group activities and would help to build students' confidence in contributing in a small group setting. Students demonstrated good levels of subject knowledge and the relevant subject-specific skills, as well as a capacity to apply their prior learning to new areas of learning.

In their responses to the questionnaires, the majority of students agreed that they are getting on well with their school work, and that the teachers encourage them to do the best that they can. A very high percentage of parents also agreed that their child was doing well, and that teaching is good in the school.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The quality of teachers' individual and collective practice was good overall. Most lessons featured effective or highly effective practice across a wide range of areas. Evidence of very good practice included thorough preparation for teaching, such as planning for an appropriate sequencing of activities, task design, and the preparation of the required worksheets and resources.

Lessons were generally well structured and were pitched and paced appropriately for the students' age and ability. The teachers provided clear demonstrations and explanations with frequent references to students' prior knowledge as well as to cross-curricular links. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject and their eagerness to impart their knowledge were very positive features of their practice.

There were some very good examples of the use of questioning strategies that promoted inclusion as well as students' oral literacy. In addition, the provision of opportunities for peer-assessment and self-reflection by students represented very effective practice. Such an approach helps to develop student voice, and should be further developed. Additionally, the skill of note-making by students, and the recapitulation or consolidation of learning by students at the conclusion of the lesson, also merit further attention.

The level of in-class support for students with learning needs was very good, and included a focus on facilitating students' participation, the development of their literacy and numeracy skills, and the organisation of relevant lesson materials. Team-teaching is a feature that has been actively promoted and undertaken by staff, and it was good to note how constructively it was used to improve student learning, and how the sharing of ideas and expertise provided a rich learning environment for students.

Subject departments are well organised and subject plans have been prepared. These plans should now be further adapted to reflect the ongoing developments in teaching and assessment in Junior Cycle. An analysis of student achievement in the certificate examinations is carried out, and patterns of uptake and achievement are good and reflect positively on the school's expectations for its students.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Recommendations from evaluations in Design and Communication Graphics, Transition Year programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and Irish were considered. Where recommendations were made relating to leadership and management, they focused on subject department planning. There was evidence of good progress in their continued implementation. It is positive that recommendations arising from inspections are shared with the whole staff.

Teaching and Learning

Where recommendations were made, the focus was on assessment practices, and the development of students' language competence. There was evidence of very good practice in the implementation of these recommendations, particularly in the area of language competence and oral production.

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

The school's engagement with the SSE process is very good, and the school demonstrates a very good capacity for improvement.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The DEIS team has recently undertaken a review of the DEIS plan, and has streamlined the plan to focus on a number of key areas, including support for students and the development of oral literacy.

This is good practice as it demonstrates how planning continues to evolve to meet the needs of the student cohort.

The board should now ensure that the SSE summary report and school improvement plan are made available to the school community annually.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The ongoing commitment to DEIS action planning, together with the changed learning environment as a result of the opening of the new extension, indicates that the time is opportune for further strengthening of the many aspects of good practice evident during the evaluation.

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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

The Board of Management of Coláiste an Chraoibhín notes the findings, and the process has already begun to implement the report's recommendations.