

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Deele College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Raphoe Lifford County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71230R

Date of Evaluation: 20-04-2018



**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.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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

Date of inspection	20-04-2018
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• Meeting with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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, teachers and parents' association members

School context

Deele College, a co-educational college, with a current enrolment of 541 students, operates under the trusteeship of County Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). It provides the full range of curricular programmes and participates in the Department's Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), action plan for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- School leadership and management are of a very high quality.
- The school provides a very broad curriculum, but some of the allocation of additional teaching resources for students with special education needs (SEN) hours is not being used appropriately and some lessons are less than the 40-minute minimum duration required.
- The overall quality of the teaching and learning observed was good; a better balance between student-centred and teacher-led activity would have benefitted students' learning.
- In line with a very good whole-school approach to caring for students, lessons were conducted in a friendly, respectful atmosphere.
- Very good progress has been made in implementing previous recommendations; there is scope for the board of management to be more involved in overseeing such progress.
- The school has demonstrated an excellent capacity for managing an improvement agenda.

Recommendations

- The board should enhance its oversight role by taking a more proactive 'critical friend' role.
- The school's allocation of additional teaching resources for students with SEN should be used in its entirety for the specified purpose in line with relevant circulars and guidelines.
- To comply with the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, all lessons should be of a minimum of 40-minutes duration.
- Teachers should continue sharing the good practice observed in many lessons and provide more student-centred active learning opportunities.
- Subject planning should be enhanced by the development of actions plans linking classroom practice with improving attainment.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

School leadership and management are of a very high quality.

Leading learning and teaching

The board of management oversees the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum which has been developed over time to meet students' needs. The board is very committed to promoting the mission statement of the school which is to 'promote mutual respect in a safe and happy school where the fulfilment of each individual's potential is our goal'. A strong commitment to inclusiveness is evident in the way the school is managed.

The board is well informed about school issues and provides very good support in dealing with many such issues. However, minutes of board meetings showed limited engagement with issues regarding attainment. The board should enhance its oversight role by taking a more proactive 'critical friend' role in looking at student attainment.

Senior management's focus on developing teaching and learning is evident in the very high value placed on the professional development of staff. A teaching and learning committee has been established to support management. The members of this committee are very engaged with projects which are contributing to developing and improving classroom practice.

Good in-school communication systems support a collaborative approach to developing teaching and learning practice. For example, a teaching-and-learning staff noticeboard provides updates on various initiatives, teachers present at whole-staff meetings, and they discuss teacher collaboration at subject meetings. In particular, the mathematics department has been involved in 'Lesson Study' and peer collaboration; it would be worthwhile promoting this experience to other subject departments as a means of sharing good practice.

The school provides a wide range of subjects and programmes and has moved to mixed-ability class groupings in recent years. It is commendable that many staff are involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students have had great success in many sports both nationally and internationally. A commitment to healthy living is reflected in the school's participation in the Health Promoting Schools project.

Curriculum-related planning is managed very effectively by senior management. All of the curricular programmes are very well organised and coordinated. It is very good practice that the Transition Year (TY) programme is continually reviewed and changed and that the Leaving Certificate Applied programme has been earmarked for a major review in the next school year.

It is good practice that the timetable has been amended in consultation with staff as part of introduction of new Junior Cycle Framework. However, five lesson periods during the week are of 35-minutes duration. In line with Circular Letter 15/2017 regarding the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, all lessons should be of a minimum duration of 40 minutes.

Support for incoming first-year students is notable. A comprehensive induction programme begins before entry and continues for the students' first days in school. The programme aims to improve long-term attendance and retention by getting students off to a good start. Parents are involved through open nights and social events, and senior-cycle students act as mentors.

Good structures are in place to support students choosing senior-cycle programmes. TY provides an opportunity for students to sample subject areas not studied previously. The guidance department provides very good support to students and parents at transition points. It is good practice that class groups are formed after students have selected subjects from an open-choice.

The new Junior Cycle Framework specifications for relevant subjects are being implemented. In some cases, the subject plans reviewed could have shown clearer links with the learning outcomes detailed in the specification.

The care and support for students are of a very high quality. Very comprehensive structures include weekly meetings of a care team who coordinate various actions and ensure that individual cases are followed through. There is appropriate sharing of information with general staff. Class tutors play an important role in the everyday care of students. It is very good practice that class tutors usually teach their class and can build a strong relationship with them as they remain their tutor for a number of years.

The school's commitment to the overall wellbeing of students is commendable. Curricular provision forms the core of the overall wellbeing programme but is supplemented by a range of extra and co-curricular events such as a lunchtime speech and drama club. Though the school has communicated with parents, some parents surveyed were not very aware of the relationships and sexuality education (RSE) programme; it would be worthwhile re-issuing the relevant information. Guidance provision is very good and the guidance department is very involved in many aspects of school life, in particular the tracking of students, and progression.

Survey results show that the code of behaviour is very clearly understood by students. A very clear structured ladder of referral aims to deal with issues quickly and effectively. Year heads play a significant role in implementing the code of behaviour. The school has adopted a restorative approach to dealing with behavioural issues and has the support of a behaviour-for-learning (BfL) teacher. Positive behaviour is promoted through various awards systems. During the evaluation, students were very well behaved, polite and helpful.

Very good systems are in place to provide support to students with additional learning needs. A high level of coordination of the various aspects of SEN support is facilitated by a core team of qualified teachers. A variety of models of support is used including one-to-one, small group and in-class support in some subjects. A draft SEN policy is near completion and will be ratified by the board in due course. A minority of the school's overall allocation of additional teaching resources for students with SEN are being used for general curricular provision. This use is not in line with the relevant Department of Education and Skills' circular and guidelines. The school's allocation of additional teaching resources for students with SEN should be used in its entirety for the specified purpose.

Parents are well informed of their child's progress and, in discussion, noted how accessible staff are to discuss any concerns. Year heads monitor the overall academic progress and wellbeing of students in their year group. A recent initiative has been the introduction of a teacher-student mentoring programme which aims to support sixth-year students reach their full potential. The school should consider how this type of support for academic attainment could be expanded to other year groups. In addition, it would also be worthwhile to re-review how student journals can be used to track attainment. More use could be made of a section in the journal for the recording of ongoing test results.

Managing the organisation

The board of management is appropriately constituted and members have received relevant training. The board is well supported by the ETB.

The school buildings and grounds are very well maintained. A major extension has been completed in recent years; a classroom for students with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and new Metalwork rooms are planned. The board is committed to safety and wellbeing but the school's health and safety policy is due for review.

The board has ratified a number of policies recently including mandatory ones dealing with child protection and critical incidents. A number of other policies have been identified for review or are being reviewed currently. It would be worthwhile setting out a schedule for a more systematic review of policies to ensure that key policies are up-to-date.

Senior management oversees the smooth day-to-day running of the school very effectively. They provide a high level of leadership to the school community and have very good people-management skills. They work well with the board and recognise challenging situations and seek resolution in an open and fair manner. The general consensus of parents is that the school is well run and that their child feels safe and well-looked after.

A range of posts of responsibility aids the effective running of the school. Duties assigned to middle management cover a wide range of relevant areas. It is notable that the assistant principals meet weekly to discuss whole-school issues and in that way provide advice and support to senior management.

The school has recognised that certain issues of reduced attendance continue to exist. Several significant supports are being implemented effectively and it is very positive to note the improving trends over recent years.

Leading school development

The school's mission statement prioritises the creation of a 'safe and happy school'. Survey results of parents and students attest to the achievement of this aim. The board is very committed to the continued success of the school and works closely with the senior management team.

The parents' association is very committed to supporting the school and parents surveyed were very positive about the school. Good use is made of text messaging to communicate day-to-day issues to parents. Parents are consulted on policy development and other issues such as timetable changes. It is good practice that the association is not burdened with fund raising.

The school has created good links with the local and wider community, as seen in work experience and the Schools Business Partnership.

Developing leadership capacity

The senior management team is committed to developing their own professional expertise. The team also values the development of leadership capacity among other staff and delegate significant responsibility for aspects of school life to staff members both formally and informally. Staff described senior management's leadership style as one of delegation and distributed leadership. Staff have supported school development effectively by taking on leadership roles in various working groups and leading out on many initiatives. It is commendable that staff have been willing to take on new and additional roles. For example, the leadership role of year heads and class tutors has grown.

The introduction of a student mentoring system is another good example of developing leadership capacity.

Students' leadership capacity is developed through initiatives such as the mentoring of first-year students. The student council is consulted on policies and works with school management to resolve issues of concern to students. Many students surveyed did not recognise that they have a say in how things are done in the school; the student council should be supported in developing proposals to raise its profile.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of the teaching and learning observed was good. Elements of very good practice were observed in all lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

A few lessons were observed where the students' experience and outcomes were consistently of a very high quality from start to finish. In many lessons, while some aspects of the lesson were of a very high standard, other aspects had scope for improvement. Examples of very good practices which need to be used more frequently are outlined below.

In some lessons, the questioning strategy used really challenged students to show their knowledge and understanding of the relevant topic. In other lessons, questioning focused too much on lower-level recall-type answers. Questioning strategies which involved a wide range of the class rather than a few volunteers was also a great support to students' learning.

In some lessons, information and communications technology (ICT) was used to enliven the learning experience and enhance student engagement. Students were excited to use ICT interactively rather than simply receiving electronic presentations of information. Setting tasks in advance of using video clips made students listen and watch more carefully than in cases where they watched passively.

Many students benefited from structured purposeful group work where they had to collaborate and achieve something in the time allotted. Their learning was apparent when they had to provide feedback at the end of the task. Sometimes group work was not as purposeful or organised.

In some lessons, students of different abilities were catered for by the use of differentiated worksheets or notes. Extension tasks were sometimes set for the more-able students. In other cases, all students received the same work to complete.

High teacher expectations resulted in high levels of student engagement. For example, in some lessons, a challenging starter activity set the tone for the rest of the lesson. In other lessons, students were required to use success criteria to reflect on their own progress. In some lessons, techniques such as placements or mini-whiteboards required everyone to participate.

Students' interest was captured when learning 'games' were used to engage them in a lively manner or when teachers made good use of demonstrations to show students what they needed to do. In other lessons, their interest was captured by linking content with other subjects or everyday experiences.

The teachers' main role in some lessons was that of facilitator. However, in many lessons, the balance of teacher-led instruction versus the level of student-centred active learning needed to be re-focused more in the direction of the student. Sometimes, the teacher voice dominated more than it needed to, and students were not challenged sufficiently to explain what they had learned.

In light of the many worthwhile initiatives already underway in the school, it is recommended that teachers continue the sharing of good practice with the aim of incorporating more student-centred active learning activities in their lessons.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Preparation of teaching resources was very good in all lessons. Most lessons had a clear sequence of activities and generally had a very clear focus or theme. Explicit learning intentions were often shared with students at the start of lessons and were used to structure the format of the subsequent lesson. However, students were not usually required to use the learning intentions in any way to monitor their own progress. Teachers who choose to use this particular strategy should share their experience of getting students to self-assess their own progress.

Lessons were very well managed. Teachers had created an orderly inclusive learning environment. Students weren't afraid to ask questions, though it would be good to see them asking more.

Homework was assigned in most lessons but students are not consistently recording homework in their journals. Students should be required to make better use of their journals to support their learning. A new development in the school is the use of an online platform to share materials with students. It would be worthwhile exploring how this resource could be used to ensure that absent students receive their homework assignments before returning to school.

As noted previously, teachers have engaged with significant CPD in recent times. They are current and up-to-date with developments in their subject areas. In respect of the skills and knowledge of their subject area, teachers' practice was competent and proficient.

A review of students' written work showed that, in some cases, such work was well monitored. In a few subjects, students benefited from the provision of constructive feedback on their written work. However, this practice was not as evident in many cases. A greater level of formative assessment should be used to support students' learning from their written work.

Subject planning is well established in the school. Meetings of subject departments are facilitated and a good record of discussions is maintained. It is a very good support that management sets agenda items for discussion at subject meetings and provides relevant templates for recording discussions.

Subject plans reviewed were of a good standard. The move to an online system will allow a more efficient sharing of resources. Student outcomes in the certificate examinations are analysed and factors affecting attainment have been identified. However, in most cases action plans for improving attainment had not been developed. Subject planning should be enhanced by the development of annual actions plans linking classroom practice with improving attainment.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Very good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous evaluations.

Leadership and Management

Very good progress has been made in implementing recommendations within the remit of management. For example, a history module is now provided in TY, a subject planning template has been introduced, and a new music room and resources have been provided.

Teaching and Learning

Good progress has been made in implementing teaching and learning recommendations. Previous recommendations focused on the use of student-centred activities, assessment and the use of formative feedback and the level of differentiation in lessons. While some very good practice was observed, there remains scope for wider use of these practices.

Subsequent to previous inspections, it was very good practice that the recommendations were promoted at whole-school level. The board could enhance its oversight role by taking a more proactive approach to following up on what happens after inspections.

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

The school has demonstrated an excellent capacity for managing an improvement agenda.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school's engagement with self-evaluation processes has been of a very high quality. There has been significant gathering of evidence from stakeholders, including parents and students. A comprehensive analysis of data has informed the judgements made about the quality of provision in DEIS themes such as attendance, attainment, and retention. The DEIS plan for 2014/17 sets out actions and targets under the eight required areas. A new DEIS plan is being developed currently. In addition to the widespread involvement of staff, it is very good practice that a core team, led by the deputy principal, is leading DEIS planning.

Many initiatives such as *Forbairt* are supporting the achievement of the DEIS targets. A review of outcomes shows improving trends across key areas. Progression to third-level has increased steadily, the overall absence rate has improved considerably, and more Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations are being taken at higher-level.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has successfully managed many changes since its establishment. During recent years, it has seen a change in management, the completion of a significant building development, as well as curricular changes. The school is availing of a wide range of support from the ETB. The board is very committed to the future of the school. Senior management has shown great leadership and has a clear focus on areas prioritised for improvement over the coming years. Staff have shown a great commitment to the creation of 'A Caring Learning Community'. Surveys show great satisfaction with the school among parents and students. In light of these strengths the school has an excellent capacity for managing its own affairs and implementing ongoing change and 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;