

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Archbishop McHale College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Dublin Road Tuam County Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71390Q

Date of Evaluation: 09-05-2019



**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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Date of inspection	9 May 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with board of management • Meetings with principal and deputy principal • Meetings with key staff • Review of relevant documents • Student focus-group interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to senior management, board of management and teachers

School context

Archbishop McHale College is a co-educational post-primary school that operates under the auspices of the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). It participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skill's action plan for educational inclusion. The school offers all junior cycle and senior cycle programmes and an optional Transition Year (TY). Part of the school's supports for students is a special class for students with autism/autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) sanctioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Overall enrolment stood at 233 students at the time of the evaluation, representing a significant increase in student numbers over recent years.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall support for students is very good and high priority is given to student care; some aspects of special educational needs (SEN) provision require action to improve, including the use of the hours allocated to the school for teaching students with SEN.
- The overall quality of school management and leadership is satisfactory with some good-quality practices identified, as well as areas for review and improvement.
- Senior management has responded proactively to the needs of the school and has also developed a range of student-focused initiatives to support teaching and learning; all layers of management were undergoing changes to personnel and assigned duties at the time of the evaluation.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with good or very good practice in most lessons and a few instances of excellent practice; areas for improvement were evident in some lessons.
- Overall, there has been good-quality implementation of recommendations related to teaching and learning from previous inspections; some recommendations related to management have not yet been implemented.
- The school is addressing school self-evaluation (SSE) through the focus of the Junior Cycle key skill of Managing Myself and has very good capacity for delivering school improvement.

Recommendations

- The board and senior management should ensure that the use of resources allocated to the school for SEN is aligned with the provisions of circular 14/2017.
- The board of management should oversee the drafting of a strategic plan to guide and support all aspects of school development, with the DEIS plan developed as a subset of the overall plan, with clearly defined targets that allow for evaluation of progress.

- Further development of the post structure should build on existing structures in line with best practice as set out in *Looking at Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* and described in Circular 03/2018 so that all middle management posts are strategically focused and are related to strategic areas for development.
- Practices that promote learner autonomy, including opportunities for development of students’ decision making, planning, critical thinking and problem solving skills, should be embedded in all lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of school management and leadership is satisfactory, with some good quality practices identified, as well as areas for review and improvement. Senior management has responded proactively to the needs of the school and has developed a range of student-focused initiatives to support teaching and learning.

Leading learning and teaching

Leadership of teaching and learning is good and some very good curricular developments have been introduced by senior management. The school places a very strong emphasis on enabling all students to achieve success through the provision of a broad and balanced education. A broad range of subjects is available at junior and senior cycle and plans to offer level 2 and level 1 learning programmes (L2LP and L1LP) to meet some students’ needs are being progressed. A student-led approach to subject choice at both junior and senior cycle is being introduced in the 2019/20 school year with a view to ensuring that students’ needs are met as efficiently as possible. At senior cycle, all students have the opportunity to gain experience of the work environment. The school’s emphasis on developing relationships with local businesses, providers of apprenticeship programmes, further education (FE) and third level colleges was identified by students as a highly beneficial aspect of their school experience.

Work has started on the digital learning plan as required by Circular 11/2018. The school has reviewed its policy on the use of digital text books which required all students to have tablet devices and from September 2019 a book rental scheme will be introduced to provide an alternative way of accessing text books. It is advised that the school should seek to integrate aspects of the digital learning plan with DEIS planning for teaching and learning.

Very thoughtful analysis of state examination exam results was seen in some subject folders. To progress this, it would be worthwhile reviewing results in relation to DEIS targets and extending the analysis to include baseline data derived from initial diagnostic testing and the results of ongoing summative assessments, as well as year-on-year data to help identify opportunities for early interventions to ensure that students are achieving to their potential at every stage of their progress through the school.

The school has a strongly inclusive ethos. It is good practice that the principles of the *Continuum of Support* are used to identify and categorise students’ needs in student-support files and in tracking students’ progress. Support for “some” and “few” is provided in one-to-one sessions, in small groups and, in some instances, through team teaching and these practices are appropriate. However, the use of SEN hours to provide support for “all” in smaller core subject class groups and in additional subjects at senior cycle is contrary to the provisions of circular 14/2017 and needs to be adjusted as

appropriate. Senior management has recognised that the current structures are not in full compliance with Departmental rules and is progressing measures to address the situation.

Good facilities are being developed in the school's Autism Resource Centre. Commendably, the school endeavours to provide a broad curricular experience appropriate to the needs of students supported by this centre, some of whom attend mainstream classes in some subject areas. Senior management is reviewing the resource allocation for the unit currently in line with best practice guidelines to ensure that educational provision for students with ASDs is delivered by a core team of teachers who are skilled and qualified to meet the specific needs of the students, to support the achievement of planned learner outcomes and to optimise the students' learning experiences. The required changes arising from the review should be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Managing the organisation

The board of management was approaching the end of its term at the time of the evaluation with one further meeting planned for September 2019. It has overseen important aspects of the life of the school such as the delivery of the new school building and increasing enrolment numbers. Commendably, the board promotes partnership with stakeholders by inviting members of the student council and the parents' association to address it at board meetings. Looking toward the future, the board now needs to oversee the drafting of a strategic plan to guide and support all aspects of future school development, with the DEIS plan developed as a subset of that overall plan. The board will need to engage in regular monitoring and review of progress.

The board has engaged with the implementation of the new child protection procedures since their introduction in December 2017. The communication of information about the relationships and sexuality education (RSE) programmes at junior and senior cycle should be reviewed in light of the uncertainty that was revealed in the parents' questionnaire responses.

The board, parents and students have an active role in the development of school policies and it was reported that there was considerable engagement with the review of the code of behaviour. It would be worthwhile establishing a rolling review schedule for all policies to support the ongoing work of the board. Also, the admissions policy is now in need of review to ensure that ongoing changes to curriculum and programme provision, such as the first-year core and optional subjects and the availability of the LCA programme are clearly documented, that admissions requirements and stipulations for all programmes and years are explicitly defined and that it complies with current legislative and circular requirements.

Roll call was taken electronically in all lessons observed and students spoke positively about rewards for good attendance. Non-attendance is reported to school management in the first class of the day and a late sign-in facility is managed by a post-holder. However, parents are not notified of students' absence from school or late arrival in school on a daily basis. A system should be put in place to notify parents as soon as absences are noted so that interventions can be put in place from the earliest possible opportunity. In addition, robust analysis and investigation of attendance patterns, student support and behaviour issues in the context of individual students' progress and achievements should be undertaken to support improved learning outcomes for students.

The code of behaviour promotes positive behaviour and covers a wide range of behaviour rules and guidelines and, commendably, each rule is explained in accessible language. A ladder of referral is clearly set out, and rewards and sanctions are defined. The code is complemented by whole-school structures including the care team, positive and negative behaviour points, the monitoring of students' journals by tutors, and a NCSE-supported behaviour for learning classroom. It would be worthwhile for parents and students to formally commit to the code on entering the school and again at the start of each school year.

The facilities provided in the new school building have enhanced considerably the learning environment for students. It was reported that negotiations are in progress to extend the campus with a view to providing on-site facilities for all subjects, including Physical Education. In the context of the changing physical infrastructure, the fire drill needs to be reviewed to ensure that robust and reliable systems are in place to ensure that all students can be accounted for in the event of an emergency.

Leading school development

The leadership of school development is evolving as a shared responsibility among the whole-school community under the direction of senior management.

The quality of communication between senior management and teachers is very good. The principal shares a weekly e-mail with teachers giving details of upcoming activities and events. An online digital platform is used to share in-school documents, subject planning and teaching resources. Also, the school has taken good steps to deal with transitions and handovers among staff and responsibility for developing teacher induction procedures and a handbook for returning teachers and those who are new to the school has been assigned to a post-holder.

The school reported that it provides placements for student teachers regularly. 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. It was also reported that a new policy to govern the way in which the school interacts with student teachers is being developed to ensure best outcomes for all stakeholders.

Developing leadership capacity

Senior management recognises the importance of the delegation of leadership through existing and emerging structures.

A new middle management structure was being put in place at the time of the evaluation. A post review had taken place in the last academic year and posts were established for the areas of school life that teachers and senior management deemed to be most important. It is recommended that further development of the post structure should build on existing structures in line with best practice as set out in *Looking at Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* and described in Circular 03/2018 so that all middle management posts are strategically focused and are related to strategic areas for development.

There is very good engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) and a number of teachers are undertaking further education including instructional leadership programmes. The board is very supportive of teachers' CPD and was reported to be in the process of establishing a CPD fund to support teachers.

Students have many opportunities to develop leadership skills. These include student mentors, the green school and yellow flag committees, the prefect and head student roles, and mental health promotion initiatives. The recently established student council has already had the opportunity to present to the board. This is very good practice and should be scheduled as a regular event. It is recommended that the student council representatives should be provided with training each year with a view to maximising the benefit that the entire school community derives from the council on an ongoing basis. School leaders should also further harness the student council and student voice in general to support school improvement and students' development as leaders.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some instances of very good practice in both teaching and learning; areas for improvement were identified in some lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In all school buildings, it was evident that teachers have sought to ensure that rooms celebrate and reinforce learning. Commendably, student work on display in classrooms was used in a number of instances as a learning resource for students. Subject-specific supports and reflective prompts were featured on desks in some rooms and, at times, the purposeful layout of desks optimised learning opportunities. It would be worthwhile to consider, on a whole-school basis, how to optimise the use and layout of classrooms to support inclusion and students' learning experience and outcomes in all subjects.

Students reported consistently that they enjoyed working with others, were given opportunities to do so, and found co-operative learning a positive and enabling experience. During the lessons observed, students were given the opportunity frequently to consult with others, most often on a one-to-one basis. Some very effective examples of co-operative learning were seen where students engaged in appropriately challenging group-work. In a minority of lessons, teacher-talk dominated and limited the opportunities for exploratory talk, and peer learning. In the most effective instances, the facilitation of feedback from groups to each other enhanced learning for the whole class. It is recommended that teachers plan for more opportunities for students to work together and learn from each other through engagement in challenging and purposeful tasks.

Student ownership of learning was evident in a number of lessons through students' use of the prompts 'EBI1' (Even Better If) and 'WWW' (What Worked Well) to engage in peer and self-assessment. The school's focus on embedding these assessment skills is commended. To ensure that the benefit of this approach is maximised, further consideration should be given to the explicit development and sharing of success criteria, and to empowering students to identify and share their own learning needs.

In some lessons, teachers demonstrated a keen awareness of how creativity and learning can be supported through the development of consistent and structured approaches to problem solving. It is advised that practices supporting the development of critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills through discovery and enquiry be shared by staff, to promote increased engagement and motivation through enabling learner autonomy and enhancing students' decision making, planning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills in all subject areas.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Teachers' interactions with students were supportive and affirming: it is evident that teachers are working hard to engage and support all students. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and their preparation was good or very good in all lessons observed.

Learning intentions were shared in all lessons, thus providing clarity regarding the learning to be undertaken. In the best examples, this included a differentiated sequence of activities to be undertaken to support the learning. A variety of 'check-ins' on student progress was noted and very good practice was seen where the teacher returned to the learning intentions during the lesson to gauge learning. This approach should be embedded in all lessons to ensure that all students are supported in their learning.

A variety of formative assessment practices was observed. Prior knowledge was surveyed and acknowledged in a number of instances and teachers guided students to use a scaffolded approach

to reflect on their learning. In such instances, the use of open and directed questions, requiring students to explore and explain their learning, facilitated high-quality assessment.

Good oral formative feedback for improvement was noted and was seen in some copies, including affirmation and the identification of areas for improvement. However, students' practical engagement with feedback was not always evident and, while some very good work was seen, the quality of presentation of students' work was inconsistent. Strategies to support students' engagement with oral and written feedback and whole-school standards for the presentation of work should be considered. Also, the teacher practice of storing student portfolios in classrooms is useful, particularly for students who are sometimes absentees, to ensure they have a body of work to support classroom-based assessments (CBAs), revision and so on.

Good overall support for differentiation and literacy-development strategies were seen in lessons. Further reflection on the associated learning and the development of mathematical thinking and problem-solving skills is now required to support ongoing development of numeracy skills.

The quality of collective curriculum planning is good, with a very good emphasis on cross-curricular planning evident in many plans. It is very good practice that a common planning template has been adopted by subject departments. While subject planning documentation for most subjects is being maintained in an online environment, this should be extended to all subjects to support collaboration and cross-curricular planning.

Further development of the schemes of work should link units of learning with specific methodologies, formative and summative assessment tasks and resources and provide space for reflective commentary. The teaching and learning strategies that are required to achieve DEIS targets should be explicitly referenced in schemes of work and implemented in classroom practice.

Some very good examples of action planning within and between subject departments were seen and this practice should be shared and extended. Commendably, teachers in single-teacher departments have engaged in Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings with local schools; it was reported that valuable sharing of ideas and resources resulted from this practice.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Evaluations in Mathematics, Science and Physics, LCA and DEIS action planning for improvement have taken place in recent years. Overall, there has been good-quality implementation of recommendations related to teaching and learning; some recommendations related to management have not yet been implemented.

Leadership and management

Partial progress has been made in addressing recommendations related to leadership and management. Key priorities are to oversee the development of a strategic plan that encompasses all aspects of school development including the DEIS plan for school improvement, and that ongoing evaluation takes place.

Teaching and learning

Greater use of active learning methodologies and better planning for differentiation were noted for improvement in earlier reports and good progress has been made in both areas. Further strengthening and sharing of effective practice should be aimed for.

The school should put in place procedures to ensure that learning from each inspection is shared across all subject departments and the board should have oversight and inquire about progress.

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

The school is addressing SSE through the focus of the Junior Cycle key skill of Managing Myself and has very good capacity for delivering school improvement.

The school's self-evaluation process

It is commended that the SSE focus of Managing Myself has permeated all aspects of school life. There is scope to further embed this focus in the relevant aspects of the DEIS plan for school improvement with the aim of increasing student autonomy and enhancing students' decision making, planning, critical thinking and problem solving skills in all subject areas.

To promote engagement with all stakeholders, a summary of the school improvement plan is required to be shared with parents and the school community (Circular 40/2016).

The school's capacity for improvement

The school has very good capacity within senior management, middle management and teachers to improve outcomes for students and to bring about any necessary improvements in its practices.

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 Archbishop McHale College is pleased with this report and is particularly satisfied to note the Inspectorate's findings on the school's innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. The report's acknowledgement of the school's high standards of School Self-Evaluation is also very welcome. The report recognises the quality of teaching and learning in Archbishop McHale College. The Board is proud of this recognition, while acknowledging that some recommendations still need to be implemented. A timetable for this implementation has been drawn up.

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

School management, teaching staff and the board of management have already begun to implement the recommendations contained in the WSE-MLL including:

- The school has developed the current timetable to make the best use of the current allocation and so as to be in line with circular 14/2017.
- A school Strategy Group has been formed with the goal of developing a strategic plan for Archbishop McHale College. A new DEIS plan with SMART targets is being drawn up.
- A management meeting now takes place with representatives of the Student Council after every Student Council meeting.
- A needs analysis will be carried out on the current post structure within the school.
- Measures have been put in place to engage more with parents.

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;