

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Clonaslee College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Clonaslee Co. Laois
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	714700

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 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

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

School context

Clonaslee College is a co-educational post-primary school and has a current enrolment of 246 students. The school operates under the auspices of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), the school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate. The school has very well established connections with the community.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The school is in a period of transition which provides the school management with an opportunity to work on a new vision for the school.
- The overall quality of school management and leadership is good with features of very good practice also noted; the senior management team (SMT) demonstrates very good capacity for progressing school improvement.
- Current curriculum provision and timetabling arrangements for the school are less than satisfactory; full provision for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is not being provided and consequently the school is not fully compliant with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools.
- The school is not using its entire special education needs (SEN) allocation to support students with additional needs.
- Staff members' voluntarism and their creation of very positive and supportive relationships with their students are acknowledged; very effective opportunities for student leadership are being progressed.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed during the evaluation was good.
- Good progress has been made in the relation to the implementation of leadership and management recommendations, with scope for improved implementation of teaching and learning recommendations, arising from previous inspection reports; there are very effective school self-evaluation (SSE) processes in place.

Recommendations

- The board of management should work with in-school management and staff to develop and communicate a vision for the ongoing development of the school in line with current curriculum changes and legislative requirements.
- The board should make adequate provision for RSE for all year groups, in order to meet the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017*; updating and ratification of the draft RSE policy should also be prioritised.

- The senior management team, with the support of the curriculum provision committee, should oversee an overall review of the school's curriculum in areas such as planning and timetabling; this should include a rebalancing of the time allocated to subjects while ensuring that the timetable and curriculum provision is planned and delivered to maximise learner outcomes.
- The board and senior management should ensure that resources to support students with SEN are fully deployed for their intended purpose and that SEN provision complies with Circular Letter 0014/2017.
- Teachers should ensure that planning for lessons allows for meaningful learning activities that facilitate deeper engagement and promote confident responses while building academic resilience; greater provision of formative assessment strategies, including written feedback to students, should be progressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The overall quality of leading learning and teaching is effective. It was evident that structures are being put in place, over the past school year, to further support the successful implementation of national policies and to enhance learner outcomes.

The school reported that it 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. To enhance structures to support the induction of newly appointed staff, the development of a staff handbook which could include school operational details and in-school management structure is suggested.

A very broad range of subject choices is offered on the school's timetable, particularly at senior cycle. Some of the school's SEN allocation is currently being used to maintain the broad range of curricular subjects and small classes. Going forward the board should ensure that subject provision is based on the appropriate resources available to the school.

Current timetabling arrangements for the school's curriculum are less than satisfactory. At both junior and senior cycle, there are some subjects where the time allocation is insufficient, or others where it is inequitable particularly for some junior cycle optional subjects.

A subject-sampling programme in first year supports students in the selection of their subjects. Optional blocks at junior cycle generally remain unchanged from year to year and this results in some students not being in a position to study French, the only available modern foreign language. Going forward, it is recommended that the school looks at how subject options are created, with due cognisance being given to *Languages Connect–Ireland's Strategy for Modern Foreign Languages in Education*.

Overall, timetabling arrangements for TY and the TY plan require significant review and development. This year the core subjects of English, Irish and Mathematics receive a total of four class periods per week. Such practices can impact negatively on the continuity of the learning experience for students and should be addressed in any future timetabling. It is recommended that a

root and branch review of the programme be undertaken following which a succinct plan for TY is prepared and communicated to all partners.

The recently established curriculum provision committee initially began work on timetabling of Wellbeing to fulfil curriculum requirements. Given the range of curriculum and timetabling issues and the move to one hour lessons, it is recommended that the curriculum provision committee should broaden its focus and work with school management to review of the school's curriculum in areas such as planning and timetabling; this should include a rebalancing of the time allocated to subjects while ensuring that the timetable and curriculum provision is planned and delivered to maximise learner outcomes

Appropriate arrangements are in place for students in junior cycle to access RSE. However, RSE at senior cycle was identified by management as an area for development. SMT has indicated its intention to address this matter without delay. As the school works to remedy the RSE provision, it is timely that the school's RSE policy is also updated to reflect Circular Letters 0037/2010 and 0079/2018.

The commitment of teachers to students' welfare is excellent, as evident in the voluntary tutor system that operates. Of particular note is the highly effective use of a time-bound mentoring system to support the emerging academic, social and emotional needs of a group of students. Very positive outcomes were archived through this intervention.

The SMT has formalised a student-support team and has built on the highly successful practices of this mentoring system. Weekly student-support meetings are convened to organise and implement a range of supports that cater for the learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs of the students. At whole-school level, students can avail of the support of "one good adult" as per the Wellbeing plan and through a system of chat and connect and referral to external services as appropriate.

Guidance is scheduled weekly for TY and fifth-year classes, with individual meetings also provided to support student needs. Within the school's resources, consideration should be given to alternative timetabling arrangements, on a modular basis.

Structures to support planning for students with SEN are good, and include the development of online individual learner profiles and the availability of two qualified SEN teachers. Models of support for SEN include team teaching, small-group withdrawal and one-to-one support. The practice whereby a reduced curriculum is offered for a few students, to provide for additional withdrawal, should be reviewed in order to support equality of opportunity for all students.

The school is not currently using the entirety of its SEN teacher allocation to meet the assessed needs of students with additional needs. School management should ensure that the entirety of the SEN allocation is used for the provision of supports for students with additional needs and SEN in accordance with Circular Letter 0014/2017.

Managing the organisation

The overall quality of managing the organisation is very good, with a few areas for improvement.

Members of the board of management demonstrated very good commitment to the school and many have served on previous boards. The board has fostered and maintains very good links with wider community.

Board members have accessed training from the LOETB and board minutes demonstrate a very good levels of awareness of its corporate role. Priorities identified by the board include improved infrastructure in the school and the ratification of policies. An overall policy framework document should be developed in order to allow for greater cyclical and systematic review of policies.

The SMT demonstrates very good capacity for leadership and management of school improvement. It was obvious that the team presented as a united team that is focused on whole-school improvement and is committed to implementing the necessary changes governed by legislation and circular letters. Regular formal and informal meetings take place and SMT members utilise their individual talents and expertise in the daily management of the school.

At the time of the evaluation, the school's middle-management team comprised six post holders, with an addition three posts pending appointment. Overall, post holders undertake their positions in a conscious and effective manner. The increase in the number of post holders should allow for greater devolvement of leadership opportunities and the creation of a middle-management structure.

Teachers are deployed in line with their expertise and specialisms. Despite the best efforts of the LOETB, school management reported difficulties and delays in appointing some teachers to the school this year which has impacted on the curriculum provision in some subject areas.

Overall, student behaviour was observed to be very good during the evaluation. The review of the code of behaviour is welcomed as the language currently used in the code is overly negative and focused on sanctions. Responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, the role of newly appointed year heads, and other practices such as the impact of the school detention system, should also be examined in the development of the policy.

Leading school development

In the context of significant changes at all management levels within the school, it is timely that school management and staff work collaboratively and develop and communicate a shared vision for the impending and necessary changes for ongoing school improvement.

Increasing enrolment and the promotion of the school are key priorities. Commendably, planning for earlier connections and communication with feeder schools is being progressed for the next academic year.

Communication with parents has been enhanced through the school's recently updated website, a very informative school prospectus, and through the school's social media account. Plans are in place to improve arrangements for parent-teacher meetings. School management should consider arranging a senior cycle option night where information pertaining to subject selection on entry into senior cycle are detailed.

Developing leadership capacity

The quality of developing leadership capacity is very good. SMT creates good opportunities for staff to work collaboratively. Most recently, working groups have been established to progress key areas for school development such as a curriculum provision, in-school management and teaching and learning committees.

Whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) has been facilitated by management and staff have engaged positively in national events including junior cycle and Droichead. A practice of

sharing learning from CPD is facilitated among staff. The expertise of staff is used to upskill each other either formally and informally, for example in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) resources. It is now opportune that management undertake an audit of staff specialisms and training needs which would inform a programme of CPD to address any deficit identified.

Very good links have been developed with outside agencies and businesses to support all aspects of school life. Plans are in place for the teachers within the LOETB to begin *teach-meets* which will also provide opportunities for staff to upskill.

Teachers reported very good levels of collegiality. They demonstrated strong commitment to students through the high levels of volunteerism that facilitates a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities supporting the holistic development of the student.

Student leadership opportunities are very good and include a mentoring system, student council, student focus group and the very recent election of a head girl and a head boy. Students have taken an active role in the promotion and support of student Wellbeing and have received the Amber Flag.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of the teaching and learning was good; with practice ranging from very good to satisfactory.

Teachers recorded student attendance in each lesson. Some high levels of non-attendance were noted in lessons, particularly for some TY and first-year students. On occasion, poor punctuality was noted at key stages in the school day, following breaks and transitions between classes, which impacted negatively on lesson time.

Learning intentions were clearly communicated with students. In a few lessons, the learning intention was re-visited thorough all activities and helped consolidate learning outcomes. In lessons where the learning intentions were content orientated, rather than reflecting a developmental and incremental approach to progressing students' learning, scope for improvement was recommended.

Overall, teachers created a positive learning atmosphere where students' efforts were affirmed and encouraged. In highly effective lessons, students' demonstrated high levels of motivation and enjoyed engaging and persisting with increasingly challenging work and activities. In the majority of lessons a good balance between well-paced teacher exposition and student input was observed.

The quality of the learning environment was highly effective. Teachers' arranged desks in a way that was conducive to student collaboration. Impressive displays of students' work, and tracking of individuals' progress, were noted in some classrooms, where the promotion of subjects using posters contributed to a positive and encouraging learning space.

In the most effective lessons, there was a very good balance between teacher instruction and meaningful student activity. The student voice was central in these lessons and momentum for learning was optimised. Where less effective practice was noted, the teacher voice was more dominant, learning was impacted, and in some lessons the chosen tasks were less engaging and challenging. There is scope to improve planning to ensure that the lesson activities adequately support student development of skills and knowledge, appropriate to their stage in the cycle.

In the most successful lessons, student knowledge attainment was well supported through the commendable use of a variety of learner-centred approaches such as group work activities and the use of ICT to support research.

Effective skills development occurred in lessons that utilised peer interactions such as brainstorming, think-pair-share activities, and mixed-ability grouping. These experiences contributed very well to students' learning, and there is scope to extend the use of these strategies across all subjects and lessons.

There were good examples observed where students' listened to and supported their peers respectfully, showing tolerance and acceptance of the variety of abilities in classes. Less evident was the student voice to ask questions, to provide suggested solutions and accept that mistakes are part of the learning process. It is recommended that all teachers ensure that risk taking, an invaluable skill in the learning process, takes place.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Lessons were generally well prepared. It is important that teachers plan for both content and skills development, in the range of activities that are selected. Teachers should strategically select meaningful lesson activities that match the learning intentions.

A good range of resources and materials were sourced in advance. Good use of ICT was a feature of a few lessons, to present information using images, audio and video clips to encourage student engagement in the topic.

In a few lessons, differentiated resources were used to support the wide range of students' abilities in the class. As the school has engaged in recent CPD on differentiation, this good practice of planning for differentiation should be extended to all lessons.

Ongoing assessment for learning was seen in lessons through the use of, for example, show-me boards and student displays. This enabled the teacher to assess learning outcomes and progressively respond to the learning needs of students as they emerged.

Questioning strategies were the predominant method of assessing learning attainment in all lessons. Lower-order questions were used effectively to check students' understanding. In a few lessons, higher-order questioning was used adequately to encourage deeper student engagement with lesson content.

In many lessons, however, due to the style of questions used and the dominance of the teacher voice, opportunities to extend student learning were missed. In most lessons, a greater balance in the use of questioning strategies would allow for more substantial student responses whilst facilitating deeper engagement with the lesson content.

In some highly effective lessons, active methodologies stimulated student engagement and promoted student voice. Teachers used students' own ideas and skilfully moderated their own input to build on and extend student learning. High levels of participation was noted in these lesson. Opportunities to extend oracy skills, while developing confidence, is a key area for improvement in all lessons.

Homework was assigned in most lessons and generally reinforced the learning. A review of students' journals indicates that there is sporadic recording of such work. Formative written feedback in students' copybooks was largely absent, with many teachers providing oral feedback in lessons on students' work. The provision of written formative feedback is an area for development in all subject areas.

Teachers' collective curriculum planning for subjects is progressing and good practice was observed. In a few instances, very good practice was also noted where subject plans documented evidence-based planning for improvement. Some subject plans are overly focused on the content to be delivered and these should be further developed to become active working documents with greater reference to subject specifications and syllabuses.

Teachers are reflecting on student outcomes in certificate examinations. There is evidence to suggest that some students are not remaining with higher level and opting for ordinary level and achieving very favourably at this level. Lessons observations would suggest that there is a need to ensure that students are consistently exposed to greater challenge in order to develop the academic resilience to remain at higher level, commensurate with ability. Commendably, plans are in place to implement a more structured approach to tracking overall student progress and attainment.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS

Leadership and Management

Good progress overall, has been made with recommendations in relation to leadership and management, including the appointment an additional teacher to Physical Education and the timetabling of Social, Personal and Health Education for third year.

Teaching and Learning

Satisfactory progress has been made on recommendations arising from previous inspection reports with further development recommended in areas including the use of formative written feedback and the use of teaching strategies that challenge and deepen student learning.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school has engaged very well in the SSE process, progressing various themes as required. The appointment of an assistant principal to oversee the co-ordination of the SSE process demonstrates the school's commitment to SSE.

Good use has been made of the six-step SSE process to support the identification and progression of improvements in teaching and learning initiatives, including very good attention to student literacy skills that was evident in most lessons. There is scope to monitor more rigorously the overall impact of selected strategies.

A number of strategies have been introduced to support the themes of literacy, numeracy, co-operative learning strategies and engaging with learning, with some successful implementation noted in lessons visited.

Reporting has been prioritised as the next focus for SSE with baseline data being gathered to support the identification of measurable targets.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school is in the middle of ongoing changes at all management levels, from board, senior management and the impending appointment of additional assistant principals. A new middle-management structure should prove very supportive while greatly enhancing the school's capacity for school improvement. The effective management of all these changes indicates that the school has very good capacity for ongoing 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 of Management was very satisfied that the inspection report states that “The commitment of teachers to student’s welfare is excellent.”

The Board of Management acknowledges that the inspection report finds “the senior management team (SMT) demonstrates very good capacity for progressing school improvement”.

The Board of Management was happy that the inspection report acknowledges “very effective opportunities for student leadership being progressed”.

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

- Allocation for SEN is now distributed (as per circular 0014/2017). A core SEN team has been established to meet weekly and discuss students’ emerging needs. Co-teaching has been encouraged to reduce student withdrawal. Recruitment has taken place to enhance expertise within the team.
- The curriculum provision committee continues to review subject choices for senior cycle in line with student and societal requirements/trends. All core subjects are now timetabled across all year groups for equal time periods. Review of options at Junior Cycle is ongoing in consultation with parents.
- All core subjects are being provided in the Transition Year Programme.
- SPHE is timetabled for all year groups to ensure the implementation of RSE programme for all students.
- A teaching and learning committee and an AP1 Post in this area has been established to promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning. Many strategies are being implemented to share teachers’ practices that have proven successful at improving students’ learning.
- Efforts continue to be made to increase enrolments. The school is exploring a broader reach regarding development of relationships with current and other primary schools. Initiatives are being planned including increased visitation of primary schools, an annual science show during Science week and greater engagement with the local community.