

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

School name	Carrigallen Vocational School
School address	Carrigallen Co. Leitrim
Roll number	71540J

Date of Evaluation: 03-04-2019



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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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	01-04-2019 - 03-04-2019
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"> • 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

Carrigallen Vocational School is a co-educational school under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). Current enrolment is 326 students. The programmes offered are the Junior Cycle, optional Transition Year (TY), established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school has a special class, Rang Carraig, for students with moderate general learning disability (MGDL) who study a combination of mainstream subjects and Level Two Learning Programmes (L2LPs).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of school management is good and the quality of leadership is satisfactory; aspects of the operation of the board of management and strategic leadership to support a number of aspects of educational provision need development.
- A broad curriculum is provided; however, planning for the imminent introduction of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is underdeveloped and provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) requires re-structuring.
- The school fosters a very positive atmosphere characterised by respectful relationships with very good levels of student care evident; tracking systems to support students to fully realise their potential need development.
- The overall quality of teaching in lessons observed was good and students' learning was satisfactory; didactic teaching approaches contributed to student passivity in some lessons.
- Overall, there has been satisfactory progress in implementing recommendations from previous inspections.
- The school has a good capacity for improvement; the recently-expanded middle-management team is a valuable support to senior management in leading strategic planning.

Recommendations

- A core team should be established to lead the planning for and implementation of LCA; alternative courses should be considered to support progression routes for senior cycle students, given the wide variety of learning needs of this cohort.
- The deployment of teaching resources for SEN should be reviewed to align fully with the principles of the revised resource allocation model, as outlined in circular letter 0070/2014 and the *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools, Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools*.
- An evidenced-based tracking system should be established to track students' progress and inform planning for appropriate support interventions.
- MSLETB should make arrangements to fill the outstanding vacancies on the board of management; the board's operation should be fully aligned to the *Board of Management Handbook for Education and Training Boards*.
- Teaching approaches which facilitate high quality active learning and provide for highly effective formative assessment should be further developed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of school management is good and the quality of leadership is satisfactory; aspects of the operation of the board of management, strategic leadership to support a number of aspects of educational provision, and systems which support students to realise their full potential need development.

Leading learning and teaching

School management and staff share a clear vision to provide a high quality holistic education programme in an inclusive learning environment. Staff overwhelmingly agree that these core values inform day-to-day practice in the school.

There is a positive culture of professional learning among staff, and this is actively facilitated by school management. Staff are accessing training for the Junior Cycle subject specifications and this is impacting positively on learner experiences.

A significant number of staff members have engaged in additional continuing professional development (CPD) and are very willing to share their learning. This mostly happens on an informal basis and a more strategic approach to developing practice would be beneficial. A teaching and learning team should be established to facilitate a sustainable and strategic approach to developing classroom practice. Initiatives in digital learning and restorative practice are being progressed by some staff, while others are progressing SSE priorities. All of these initiatives should be streamlined into a coherent learning and teaching action plan for inclusion in a whole-school strategic plan.

The school provides a very broad range of subjects and programmes. This is complemented by a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. In junior cycle, the first-year sampler programme supports students in making informed subject choices. The wellbeing programme is being developed and a number of L2LPs have been introduced to meet the needs of students with MGLD. However, strategic planning for implementing whole-school aspects of the Junior Cycle Framework is underdeveloped. The board should establish a curriculum advisory group to examine current junior cycle provision and consult with all stakeholders to assist in identifying a shared vision and plan for future curriculum provision.

Option bands for junior and senior cycle are informed by students' preferences and school management makes deliberate efforts to accommodate all students' needs. However, questionnaire data indicate a need to review the quality of information and advice provided on subject choices.

The programme co-ordinator plays a key role in overseeing the operation of LCVP and TY. Very good procedures are in place for the co-ordination, planning and evaluation of each programme. TY offers a vibrant range of learning experiences. However, an overall assessment framework for TY should be developed. LCVP is offered to all students in senior cycle but some discontinue the programme in sixth year; this results in a number of students studying at the back of the classroom during Link Modules. This practice is not optimal. An alternative programme of tuition should be provided to eliminate the need for study periods.

School management and staff recently decided to introduce LCA in September 2019. At the time of the evaluation, planning for LCA was at a very early stage and CPD to support teaching and learning of the programme had not been accessed. A core LCA team should be established to complete all necessary preliminary planning and additional CPD accessed in advance of LCA implementation.

Alternative courses should also be considered to support progression routes for senior cycle students, given the varying range of learning needs of this cohort.

High expectations are set for student achievement and some good use is made of baseline data to track student progress. There is scope to use data more effectively to inform action planning for improved learner outcomes. School management should further develop an evidence-based tracking system to monitor and mentor student progress, and to inform targeted interventions for students who may experience difficulties.

Rang Carraig has a customised timetable which commendably provides a programme of learning comprising L2LPs and mainstream subjects. Student support plans are devised to support learning. However, planning for the L2LPs and procedures for monitoring student progress should be further developed to ensure that planning is sufficiently aligned to individual student's needs and that progress is closely monitored.

The quality of provision of support for mainstream students who have SEN is fair and is in need of re-structuring in a number of areas. At present the deployment of a significant proportion of teaching resources allocated for SEN is used to generate a third class-group in each year to teach mainstream curriculum subjects for students who have Irish exemptions, with additional classes offered in English and Maths. This arrangement does not allow for the planned interventions to be sufficiently aligned to the specific needs of students. While some co-operative teaching is used in mainstream settings, a greater level of planning is required to ensure that the interventions provided are sufficiently aligned to individual student's needs. Provision for students with EAL is unsatisfactory. Systematic assessments of students' language levels should be carried out to inform an appropriate programme of support.

There are a number of staff members with specialist qualifications in SEN, but these teachers are not timetabled to support the students with the greatest level of need. While a core team of SEN teachers meets weekly, this meeting is not sufficiently focused on co-ordinating or targeting interventions which are adequately aligned to students' needs. Planning and provision for students with SEN should be re-structured in accordance with 0014/2017 and *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools, Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools*. CPD should be accessed to inform the effective implementation of the revised allocation model.

The quality of student care is very good; all staff play a key role in supporting students' care needs. Student questionnaire data indicates that the majority of students feel safe and cared for in the school. First-year students and their parents are well supported during the transfer from primary school. The year head and tutor system is very effective in supporting student care. A student-support team is in operation and personal counselling supports are provided through the guidance programme. *Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service* also supports the school in meeting students' individual care needs.

A range of curriculum subjects provide for students' wellbeing. The appointment of a qualified subject specialist has resulted in Physical Education (PE) being rolled out to all students. All remaining students should now be provided with PE.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is provided in junior and senior cycle. However, the absence of a detailed programme plan is impacting on the delivery of a high-quality programme. The recently-appointed SPHE co-ordinator should lead a core team to develop a curriculum plan that provides for high quality learner experiences and outcomes on an incremental basis from first year through to sixth year.

Aspects of provision for Guidance need review. While senior cycle students are provided with timetabled Guidance, some of the ex-quota guidance allocation is underutilised. This should be addressed in the context of developing junior cycle Guidance interventions.

A number of policies relating to student care are in draft form or are in need of updating, and a whole-school guidance policy needs development. The board should oversee the ratification of these policies, in accordance with Department guidelines.

Managing the organisation

The operation of the board of management is fair. The current board was established in 2014. At the time of the evaluation there were two outstanding vacancies for parent nominees, which means that all stakeholders are not represented. Minutes from the last five board meetings show that the board met for less than the minimum requirements and that attendance at most meetings just met a quorum. A new board is due to be appointed in 2019. MSLETB should make arrangements to fill the outstanding vacancies on the board of management and going forward should ensure that it always has a full complement of members. The board should strengthen its governance role by adopting the procedures as outlined in the *Board of Management Handbook for Education and Training Boards*.

The board is kept informed on school matters by the principal. It is good practice that members of the middle-management team have recently presented to the board on curriculum-related matters. Additional mechanisms to support the board's oversight role in teaching and learning should be developed and a sufficiently robust system for updating whole-school policies should be established.

The principal and deputy principal are committed to managing and overseeing the day-to-day running of the school. Questionnaire data indicate a high level of satisfaction with how well the school is run. In recent years a significant amount of the senior management team's time has been taken up with operational matters, with limited time for their strategic leadership role in teaching and learning. This was reported to be as a result of the moratorium on posts of responsibility. While duties have been agreed between the principal and deputy, refinement is necessary to allow time for strategic leadership functions, including a stronger leadership role in teaching and learning. The new middle-management appointments should facilitate an enhanced leadership structure.

Staff are deployed in line with their subject specialisms. However, the allocation of class-contact time is less than the required minimum and non-timetabled hours excessive for a very small number of whole-time teachers. This anomaly should be rectified.

The code of behaviour is underpinned by the principles of positive behaviour and mutual respect. Students have a clear understanding of the code, and student behaviour was exemplary during the evaluation. Questionnaire data gathered during this evaluation should be used to further inform the review of the code currently underway.

Communication systems within the school are effective. Parents and students who met with inspectors commended the approachability and willingness of staff to address issues.

Good use has been made of school data to develop an action plan aimed at improving attendance. While the majority of students attend regularly, there is evidence of some less than optimal attendance patterns. The effectiveness of the current initiatives should be carefully reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that improved attendance is being achieved.

The school building and grounds are very well maintained. To support the inclusive ethos and provide for Wellbeing, students can access a breakfast club free of charge. Some good progress has been made recently in improving road safety at the entrance to the school. Regulations on student movement to and from the campus during the school day remain in need of review to minimise pedestrian traffic.

The board is actively advocating for improved facilities as the campus is in need of further development. Facilities for PE are inadequate and this is limiting the breadth of learning experiences. The learning space allocated for students in Rang Carraig is also limited. There is an outstanding issue in relation to the disposal of chemicals from the science laboratories. As responsibility for the building projects rests with the ETB, it is very important that the board and the ETB work together to ensure these issues are actively progressed and that the outstanding issues are addressed.

Leading school development

Whole-school strategic planning requires development. The school plan reviewed during the evaluation is outdated. The absence of a documented over-arching strategic school action plan limits the effectiveness of strategic planning. Questionnaire responses also indicate a significant need to incorporate the views of parents and students further on planning matters.

The board should oversee the development of a Strategic School Plan, in collaboration with MSLETB and including all school stakeholders. *Looking at Our Schools 2016* should be used to benchmark practice and inform areas for development. Whole-school priorities should be refined and ranked to facilitate sustainable and highly-effective collaborative planning for improvement. The school self-evaluation (SSE) school improvement plans should be incorporated into this document. Progress should be rigorously monitored by the board and senior management team.

The school is very welcoming of parents. There is a committed parent association but there is scope for the board to consider additional strategies to encourage active parental participation in school matters. The school is an integral part of the local community and has developed very effective links with local organisations, all of which contribute positively to learner experiences in the school.

Developing leadership capacity

Post-holders play a key role in supporting the work of senior management. The schedule of posts was recently reviewed and good mechanisms are in place to monitor the work of post-holders. There is scope for more regular year head meetings to assist in mentoring and tracking student progress.

Staff members are very committed to their work and display a sense of pride and loyalty to the school. Staff demonstrate very good flexibility in taking on revised duties and high levels of volunteerism are apparent.

The school provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student-teachers and learners.

A democratically elected student council is in operation and is assisted by a liaison teacher. The SSE process provides additional opportunities for student voice. The planned introduction of a student buddy system is commendable and will further facilitate leadership opportunities.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Overall, the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good and students' learning was of a satisfactory standard. The quality varied significantly between lessons, with some very good practice evident. In the majority of lessons observed, didactic teaching approaches contributed to student passivity. There was scope to enhance the quality of learner experiences by extending the range of strategies to challenge students to actively engage, and to build on, consolidate and reflect on their learning.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In all lessons, classroom interactions were positive, and a supportive, respectful atmosphere prevailed. Special-needs assistants provided valuable assistance to students in their care.

Learning intentions were shared with the students in almost all lessons. Highly-effective learning was noted when the teachers reinforced the lesson content by facilitating learners to actively revisit the intentions and consolidate their learning. In some lessons, there was scope to enhance the quality of learning through greater planning for differentiation and to provide for deeper levels of student reflection.

Students responded very well when classroom strategies enabled them to take responsibility for their learning. In a few lessons, very good collaborative learning was noted and students demonstrated a good ability to work independently and collaboratively. There was a better balance between teacher and student voice in lessons where meaningful co-operative learning was facilitated. In the majority of lessons observed, there was an over-reliance on teacher-led instruction, with students being overly passive. Teachers should collectively explore the full potential of strategies that enhance active learning and support the student voice within lessons.

Some effective strategies for supporting students' literacy were evident. Subject-specific terminology was well taught and reinforced. In the language lessons, very good use was made of the target language. There is a need to differentiate teaching resources to better meet the literacy needs of EAL students.

Exemplary practice was observed in a few lessons where examples of high quality student work were used as exemplars of good practice. When teachers facilitated the identifying and affirming of good quality student work they provided a key strategy for sharing success criteria and developing student capacity for self-assessment.

To increase parents' and students' understanding of the junior cycle assessment framework, reporting systems should be further developed. Feedback that reflects the range of student learning experiences and the descriptors used with classroom-based assessments and certificate examinations should be provided.

Some good practice in the use of digital media was noted. All teachers, and students from first-year to fifth-year have tablet devices. In highly-effective lessons, students used these devices to actively engage with learning. However, in the majority of lessons the tablets were underutilised; there was an over-reliance on students transcribing information from electronic slides. The school should develop a strategic plan for sharing highly-effective practice for curriculum integration of digital devices.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Overall planning and preparation for lessons was good, with some very good practice. In a small number of lessons there was scope for development. Highly-effective practice was evident when the teaching approaches supported developmental and incremental learning. Where learning was less successful, lessons were characterised by a more teacher-centred approach.

The overall quality of assessment was satisfactory. In many lessons learning was insufficiently consolidated. Teacher-led oral questioning was the dominant assessment strategy. In many instances student answering was brief, with teachers then expanding on the answers themselves. A greater use of higher-order questions with appropriate wait time would develop learner experience and should be included in all lessons.

Teachers need to increase the opportunities for students to work collaboratively; greater use of group work and peer assessment should be used to facilitate a move away from instructional teaching and provide opportunities for students to develop as independent learners.

Homework is assigned and corrected regularly. Some very good formative feedback was apparent in students' copybooks and there is scope to develop this practice. Students received very good oral feedback on the quality of their work in a number of lessons. It would be worthwhile for teachers to direct students to take note of suggestions and to follow up on improving their own work.

Teachers' collaborative practice is good. Recent staff training is being used effectively to develop a shared electronic platform to support collaborative planning. Overall the programme planning reviewed showed significant variation in quality of practice. Plans that demonstrated clear incremental progression in learning, and outlined specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies were illustrative of very good practice. Summative assessment practice needs review in light of the Junior Cycle Framework.

Subject teams have begun to analyse examination outcomes, but a deeper level of analysis is required. While some positive developments are noted, attainment and the challenge of raising expectations remain areas for development. Subject teams should use the outcomes of an analysis of attainment data to develop subject-specific action plans that identify specific priorities and strategies which will support student learning and negate any identified barriers to success.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Overall, the implementation of recommendations from previous inspections is satisfactory. While some good progress is apparent, a number of previously made recommendations still need to be fully realised and have been noted again as areas for development in this report.

Leadership and Management

School management has made some good progress in implementing recommendations. A SPHE co-ordinator has been recently appointed and a student support team is now established as was recommended in previous subject inspections of SPHE and Guidance. Some facilities have also been improved. However, a number of themes from the previous reports, remain areas for development.

Teaching and Learning

There is significant variation in the extent to which subject teams progressed recommendations. Some good progress has been made in programme planning and in developing classroom practice. However, a number of recommendations have not yet been realised.

Following inspections subject teams should develop action plans that support highly effective implementation of recommendations. School management should maintain an oversight role in ensuring that recommendations are progressed in a timely manner.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Management and staff are committed to school improvement. The school is engaging with the SSE process and some good progress is evident. The school reported difficulties in maintaining a momentum in SSE planning due to the moratorium on posts of responsibility.

An SSE co-ordinator has been recently appointed and the six-step process has been used effectively to support improved student attendance. Draft school improvement plans are in place with some very good practice evolving in the identification of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART) targets. It is important that future targets are focused on embedding effective practice in teaching and learning, with clear links to subject-department planning. Systematic procedures for monitoring progress also need to be implemented.

The board should adopt a more active leadership role in SSE and make arrangements for the ratification of the school improvement plan in accordance with circular 40/2016.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has good capacity for improvement; the recently-expanded middle management team will be a valuable support to senior management in leading strategic planning. The school needs to further develop teams to support internal collaborative review and action planning for improvement which is sustainable and effective in meeting the needs of the school community.

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;