

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Davitt College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Springfield Castlebar County Mayo
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	76060U

**Date of Evaluation: 05-12-2018**



---

**An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING**

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

### **How to read this report**

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017.
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING.

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	3, 4 and 5 December 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with board of management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li><li>• Meetings with key staff</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Student focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with parents</li><li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Davitt College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school which operates under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). It comprises a post-primary school on the Springfield campus and the Castlebar College of Further Education (CCFE) on a separate campus. The focus of this evaluation is the post-primary school which has an enrolment of 681 students currently. All the curricular programmes are offered including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good with highly effective practices noted in areas such as leading teaching and learning and developing leadership capacity; all layers of management were undergoing changes to personnel and assigned duties at the time of the evaluation.
- Overall support for students is very good; high priority is given to student care and there is very good rapport between students and teachers.
- Some aspects of special educational needs (SEN) provision require action to improve, including the use of allocated hours, the development of support plans and the sharing of information.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Very good information and communications technology (ICT) is available; its potential to support teaching and learning, and for administration purposes, has not been fully utilised.
- There was very good implementation of previous recommendations in classrooms and commendable progress was made with recommendations for which management was responsible; there has been good progress to date in respect of school self-evaluation (SSE) and overall capacity to implement any future improvements is very high.

#### Recommendations

- The current changes within each of the management layers should be used to refocus and realign the school vision and developmental priorities and to include meaningful input from all stakeholders.

- SEN provision needs additional and prioritised attention to ensure allocated hours are appropriately used, individualised targets are set collaboratively and relevant information is available to all staff through the online shared platform.
- The potential of ICT to support learning, teaching, collaborative working and administration should be developed further.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall quality of leadership and management is good with highly effective leadership and management practices evident in areas such as leading teaching and learning, and developing leadership capacity. At the time of the evaluation, the board of management, senior management team and middle management layer were all in a process of transition with personnel changes and realignment of duties underway.

#### **Leading learning and teaching**

The quality of leading learning and teaching is very good. There is a broad and balanced curriculum offered and students' holistic development is supported through a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Subject options change every year to meet the needs of the students and every effort is made to ensure students and parents are fully informed before making decisions.

Management works to promote a culture of learning throughout the school. Teachers are encouraged and supported to avail of opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD); sharing learning from CPD at whole-school level is well established. The whole-school CPD programme is adapted to meet the identified needs of the school and there is a strong focus on building professional capacity among staff members.

Innovation and creativity in teaching and learning are welcomed and many students have opportunities to represent the school at regional, national and international events and competitions. All successes are celebrated and enthusiasm for and interest in certain subjects is enhanced by these experiences.

The school reported that it regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is included among the standards in the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* as it can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student teachers, students and the teacher education institutions.

All curricular programmes are available to students. TY is optional but the high uptake is an indication of its success. Within TY, there is strong commitment to the holistic development of students. Commendably, the option to partake in TY is open to students who intend to follow the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. Fifth-year and sixth-year LCA students are combined for some subjects. It was reported to be very successful for some subjects and regular review ensures that changes are made where needed. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is well established in the school. However, the practice of timetabling LCVP and Physical Education (PE) at the same time needs to be addressed. A new co-ordinator had been appointed for Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and provision was under review at the time of the evaluation. The use of JCSP statements for all junior cycle students is commendable.

There is regular review of each curricular programme with a clear focus on the rationale and full potential of each. Such good practice helps ensure that the quality of provision for students in the programmes remains high. It is recommended that feedback from parents and students be included also in the end-of-year reflection of each curricular programme.

The school has an open, inclusive admissions policy. Due to increasing enrolment, the policy will need review so that it outlines clearly the criteria for how students are selected for admission and the process for defining maximum numbers for enrolment. Criteria for admission into the available curricular programmes should be outlined clearly also.

Student leadership is promoted in many ways including John Paul II awards, Green-Schools, GAISCE, involvement in a mentoring programme and membership of the democratically elected student council. Plans are also in place to train students in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The student council is involved in various school activities as well as working on unique projects such as this year's culture board. There is scope to further develop the channels of communication between the student council and the wider student body. It would also be beneficial for the student council to build a working relationship with the parents' association.

Very high priority is given to student care. A dedicated care team meets regularly and the well-established year-head/tutor system has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and the School Completion Programme (SCP) project worker work collaboratively with the school community to put supports and strategies in place to help students overcome obstacles to their educational success. Currently, the mentoring system involving TY students is an option for first-year students. It is recommended that the mentoring system becomes an integral part of the transition programme for all first-year students.

A range of approaches is in place to support students with special educational needs (SEN), including learning-support classes, small-group mainstream tuition, in-class support and one-to-one sessions. A core team provides this support and there is an action plan to build capacity among staff in SEN provision. At the time of the evaluation, the overall quality of provision for students with SEN was fair. Additional and prioritised attention for SEN is recommended. There is need to ensure that resource hours for SEN are allocated appropriately, and that the strategies outlined in the individual support plans are meeting the identified needs of each student in a positive and productive manner. In addition, parents and students should have purposeful input into the target-setting process. Student progress should be monitored appropriately and intervention strategies reviewed accordingly. All relevant information should be made available to mainstream teachers.

### **Managing the organisation**

Overall, the quality of managing the organisation is good. At the time of the evaluation, there were some difficulties with regard to the composition of the board in respect of MSLETB membership. There is need to ensure that board members are replaced quickly where necessary, and that higher expectations are set for levels of attendance at board meetings and for engagement with school activities. A new deputy principal joined the senior management team in the previous school year, and a deputy principal of long standing was due to retire shortly after the evaluation. Whole-school reflection on the needs of the school and the duties to be distributed among middle management post holders had been undertaken, but the process of filling the posts was not yet completed. Teachers indicated high levels of frustration as the process to appoint assistant principals and

reassign duties could not progress until the MSLETB conducted interviews; it was indicated that the interview process was imminent.

There is regular communication between the chairperson of the board and the principal. The board is supportive of the work of the school but difficulties in reaching a quorum for some meetings were reported. An agreed report is provided for teachers after each board meeting. This good practice should be extended by making the report available to the parents' association. There is scope to further explore the potential of ICT to strengthen the existing channels of communication among all stakeholders. For example, consideration should be given to providing the students' council and parents' association with access to a page on the school's website.

The current staggered start and finish to the school year means some year groups are not provided with the required number of days' tuition in line with circular M29/95, *Time in School*. This needs to be addressed by school management.

### **Leading school development**

The quality of leadership for school development is good. Strong links are fostered and maintained with local businesses, community organisations and educational partners. The vision to become a school of choice has been realised and it is a fitting time to refocus and realign the school's priority areas for improvement. The spectrum of socio-economic and academic needs has broadened and improvement targets must reflect this. It is recommended that meaningful input from all stakeholders be facilitated and the vision and developmental priorities for the future be shared with the entire school community.

The parents' association (PA) is affiliated to the National Parents' Council for post-primary schools. The PA provides support at school gatherings and works with the HSCL co-ordinator to organise events for parents. During discussion, PA members demonstrated high levels of capacity and willingness which the school should harness more purposefully for all aspects of school development. There is scope to develop and strengthen communication channels and opportunities for collaborative working between the board, PA and students' council.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

The quality of developing leadership capacity is very good. Management welcomes ideas and suggestions from teachers resulting in a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities being available to all students. High value is placed on in-house expertise for upskilling staff and very good levels of collegiality among staff were reported and observed.

The current review of the posts of responsibility is timely. It provides scope to realign the allocated duties to meet the changing needs of the school. It is recommended that responsibilities of all assistant principals reflect whole-school management duties, teaching and learning responsibilities are distributed throughout, and the process includes meaningful reflection for all school managers.

## **2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The overall quality of learning and teaching was very good.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

In almost all lessons, learning was supported through the use of clear learning intentions shared at the start of the lesson and used throughout to reflect on progress. Enjoyment was highest when students were actively and purposefully engaged with the lesson content and where a clear learning focus was used to frame the lesson. Students were provided with regular opportunities to develop skills to self-assess and to assess the progress of their peers. Pair and group work were facilitated regularly and students worked collaboratively and productively on the set tasks.

Student behaviour was exemplary and very good rapport between teachers and students was observed. Learning environments were well presented with a combination of students' work and relevant subject specific material on display. Communal areas celebrated the creativity of students as well as displaying awards and photographs of a range of activities. In almost all lessons, supportive learning atmospheres were evident with students' willing to ask questions, seek clarifications and offer solutions. More opportunities for students to use the language of the subjects purposefully and in context should be facilitated. There were some lessons where students would have benefited from a better balance between teacher and student input; in these lessons, students were overly dependent on the teacher for each stage of the lesson and teacher voice was overly prominent.

### **Teachers' individual and collective practice**

The overall quality of teaching was very good; this included fair practice in one lesson and excellent practice in two lessons. Practice was found to be fair where the lesson content did not reflect the interests, abilities and needs of the students and where progress was not monitored sufficiently. Very high-quality planning, evident in the most effective lessons, resulted in students being actively engaged with the lesson content while working collaboratively and purposefully. In these instances, all students experienced elements of success and students were facilitated to assess their own progress and to identify areas and strategies for improvement.

In almost all lessons, teachers demonstrated good levels of subject knowledge and very high levels of enthusiasm for their subject areas. A broad range of teaching methodologies was used effectively. Resources were well prepared and consisted of a combination of sourced and bespoke activities, tasks and work sheets. Questioning was used effectively in most lessons. Most effective practice was observed where a combination of directed and global strategies was used to check for understanding, to differentiate and include all students. There were opportunities, in some instances, to facilitate the development of students' oral presentation skills through the use of purposeful higher-order questioning. There was scope to further develop the effective use of questioning in some lessons.

ICT was used to support teaching and learning in most lessons. Slide presentations were used regularly to frame lessons and a range of online resources was used to support learning. It was reported that some teachers shared information with students using a shared ICT platform. This practice is commendable. There is scope to further utilise the potential of ICT to support both teaching and learning. Future planning should include opportunities for students to have more purposeful engagement with ICT to support learning.

The quality of subject department planning ranged from very good to fair. Worthwhile practices included rotation of co-ordination, maintaining details of teachers' CPD in the subject department plan, common schemes of work, analysis of state examinations' data and the use of ICT to facilitate

sharing of resources and reflection. It is recommended that the potential of ICT be fully utilised to support improvements in collective and collaborative work among teachers. There is scope to improve the quality and consistency of the schemes of work. The most effective examples consisted of learning intentions linked to specific methodologies and modes of assessment with clear timeframes and a section for reflection. Subject departments should broaden the analysis of their own examination results to help ensure all students are working to their potential and to help set improvement targets and strategies.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

#### **Leadership and Management**

There has been commendable progress in the implementation of most of the recommendations from the previous whole-school evaluation (WSE), and subsequent inspections. A recommendation from the previous WSE in respect of SEN provision is yet to be implemented, as is the purposeful involvement of parents and students with policy development.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

In the main, very good progress has been made with the implementation of recommendations relating to teaching and learning. The use of learning intentions has been well embedded; their effectiveness was most notable when the focus was on what would be learned and methodologies and tasks were planned accordingly. Most lesson content was suitably differentiated, ensuring elements of success and challenge for all. Improvements to assessment strategies have resulted in self and peer assessment becoming regular features in many lessons. There remains scope to provide more written formative feedback on students' work. Most effective practice was observed in lessons where there was a good balance between teachers' and students' inputs as well as active engagement with the set tasks.

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

#### **The School's Self-Evaluation Process**

There has been good progress to date in respect of school self-evaluation (SSE). The SSE process is having a positive impact on school improvement with evidence of strategies embedded into the majority of lessons observed. Currently, co-ordination is undertaken very diligently but voluntarily, and is not included in the duties of middle or senior management. A large number of teachers are on the SSE committee with areas of focus distributed amongst them. To consolidate the SSE process management should consider including SSE in senior/middle management duties. There is scope to facilitate more purposeful parental and student input in the data-gathering process.

#### **The School's Capacity for Improvement**

The school has a very high capacity to implement any future school improvement plans. There is a strong sense of collegiality combined with a very good work ethic among the staff.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

*(blank)*

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

### *Posts of Responsibility*

The process for interviewing candidates for school posts of responsibility has now begun by Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB since January 2019. Upon completion of appointments, a full review and reassignment will be conducted of the schedule of posts in Davitt College.

### *Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision*

The Board of Management takes on board the advice of the inspectors and is prioritising the implementation of a short and medium term plan to meet the recommendations made in the area of SEN. A full review of the SEN provision in Davitt College has begun and a reconfiguration of resources is envisaged at this time.

Additional staff members have agreed to complete the Post Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs in the 2019/2020 school year. Further to this, the school will continue to build capacity amongst the staff skill set in this area by accessing CPD from the National Council for Special Education.

### *ICT to Support Learning*

The school management is accessing support from the PDST and a date is set in early Spring 2019 to commence the development of the Digital Learning Framework Plan for Davitt College with a working group of representatives from a range of subject areas. Additionally, the school is working with Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB to enhance the provision of ICT resources to all subject departments in Davitt College.

### *Admissions Policy*

A revised Davitt College Admissions Policy has been ratified in consultation with Staff, Parents' Association, Student Council and Board of Management, upon the advice of the inspectors and is now in operation.

### *School Self-Evaluation*

The Board of Management is committed to continuing the very well-established school self-evaluation processes which are embedded in Davitt College. The school will endeavour to enrich these practices with additional parent and student inputs.

## 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;