

**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>	Castletroy College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Newtown Castletroy Co. Limerick
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	76073G

**Date of Evaluation: 16 February 2017**



## **WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?**

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

## **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

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

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

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	16 February 2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with board of management</li><li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principals</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

Castletroy College is a designated community college, where the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) is the patron, with the Roman Catholic diocese of Limerick as a trustee partner. It is co-educational and has a defined geographical catchment serving the local suburban and rural community on the eastern side of Limerick City. When established in 2000, it was built to cater for 800 students. Due to very high demand from within its catchment area, it was extended in 2006 and now caters for 1218 students. The school is an inclusive organisation, educating students from a variety of ethnic, faith, economic and social backgrounds. It has developed a strong profile for students' academic and extra-curricular achievements in the years since its foundation.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Management and leadership at all levels of the school is of a very high quality, supported by an effective board of management, a very progressive senior management team, and highly effective distributed leadership among post-holder and non post-holder teachers.
- The design, implementation, and review of student management systems is exceptionally good, resulting in proactive care for students and an orderly learning environment.
- While students undertake numerous leadership roles within the school, questionnaire findings indicated that a significant majority of students do not feel that they have a say in how things are done in the school.
- An exemplary standard of teaching was seen in a significant number of lessons and the overall quality of teaching was good or very good in almost all lessons; wider and more effective use of formative assessment practices was an area for development in a very small number of lessons.
- The quality of learning was good or very good in most lessons; integrating active and collaborative learning effectively were areas for development in a small number of lessons.
- The school has exceptionally high capability for change and improvement, based on its ongoing school self-evaluation (SSE) work and its overall very good implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.
- It was reported that there is full engagement with the new junior cycle specification by teachers of English.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- To support self and peer assessment by students, active and collaborative learning strategies and learning intentions and success criteria should be strategically planned for and implemented in all lessons.
- Involving students in decision-making through more extensive data collection and analysis of their feedback, and further expanding the avenues for in-school student leadership and affirmation should be prioritised.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

#### ***1.1 School ownership and management:***

The board of management provides effective and commendable leadership to the school. The board manages challenges arising from the school's position as an oversubscribed school of choice through ongoing admissions policy review and collaborative decision-making.

Through its composition, the board brings together a significant body of educational expertise, ensuring it remains well-informed about the changes in the local primary and post-primary student landscape due to the impact on applications for enrolment into the future. It is also very familiar with parents' association (PA) work and with school-self-evaluation (SSE) work in the school, benefiting from updates at all board meetings on these areas. An agreed report is finalised at the end of all board meetings, and is provided to staff and the PA. Parent and teacher questionnaire responses indicate that there is scope to review how communication from the board to all stakeholders could be further improved.

The board needs to become more informed about the implementation elements of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) in the school's dual union context and to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted in making arrangements for the school's junior cycle curriculum. Also, in terms of complying with requirements for school self-evaluation (SSE) for the 2016-2020 period, the board should annually complete a policy and legislative checklist of their ongoing process of policy development and review, and of their compliance with requirements. Policies in need of development include Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Data Protection, and Internet Acceptable Use Policy. A draft strategic plan that has been prepared by the senior management team could be a useful tool for the board to guide action in relation to its identified priorities.

The PA contributes to school life by providing feedback on draft policies, by organising well-attended talks on student wellbeing issues for parents, and by taking briefings on inspection reports and on SSE work ongoing in the school. Parent questionnaire responses indicated that most parents feel that the school is well run, that their children are safe and well looked after, and that their children are doing well in school. Now that e-learning applications are being extended across school life, systematically

collecting and analysing parents' views using technology would further support school management's decision-making.

### **1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning**

The quality of in-school leadership and management is very good. As a senior management team, the principal and two deputy principals very successfully manage the school's human and physical resources, contributing to its orderly learning environment. While the student management and communication systems they operate were established with the foundation of the school, they continue to refine them based on evidence and self-evaluation.

The senior management team is strongly committed to ongoing development of excellent practices in teaching and learning, and to proactively delivering student care and curriculum development to meet changing needs. It leads learning by networking with other schools and organisations to gather ideas as to good practice, by facilitating professional development of staff through a blend of external and internal continuing professional development (CPD), by the principal's visits to lessons, and by respectfully managing the challenges faced by their dual union school in relation to implementing the new junior cycle framework.

A progressive learning community has been established in the school, where teachers present at staff meetings about specific methodological or student support practices and where individuals share their areas of pedagogical research expertise with each other through the staff SSE newsletter. The creation of link teacher roles to support SSE priorities was another significant move by senior management in developing teachers' collaborative practice, specifically in leading whole-school teaching and learning improvement. The supports that have been put in place for student teachers and for newly qualified teachers, through the school's participation in the *Droichead* programme, attest to the teaching staff's spirit of teamwork and of peer support.

The breadth of subjects and programmes available to students and the first-year and Transition Year subject-sampling arrangements are both highly valued by students and parents. The very good timetabling provision for subjects is expertly managed by the deputy principal for curriculum development. A move to forty-minute periods, where the school previously provided a mixture of thirty-five and forty minute periods, has gone through a process of consultation with staff and the board. Parent and student input will also be needed before those changes can be finalised. Overall, there is very good timetabled provision for subjects. The established practice of how the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) has been timetabled is now due for review, given the numbers of students who are opting out of LCVP certificate examination preparation in sixth year, having completed fifth-year work for the programme.

There has been very good engagement by teachers of English with all aspects of that junior cycle specification. This has been replicated in the science and business departments by the majority of teachers, with a small number not engaging with planning for the school-based assessment aspects of the specification at the time of the evaluation. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action.

Transition Year (TY) is a highly-regarded, heavily-subscribed programme in the school. Key TY strengths include the timetabled review classes which seek to gather student feedback on learning, the new app for communication of TY activities to parents and to students, and ongoing work to improve the TY admissions process and policy. Now that a TY co-ordination post is in place, there is

an opportunity to lead the core TY planning team in reviewing feedback from students, teachers, and parents to support ongoing programme design, to promote learning experiences that are different from Leaving Certificate experiences, and to promote more cross-curricular projects.

There is a highly-developed student-management and care system in place. It is based on consistent monitoring of the student homework journal, daily assembly, and weekly tutor time. It is supported by the close ongoing contacts between class tutors, assistant year heads, year heads, and senior management. It feeds into the confidential, action-focused weekly meetings of the junior and senior pastoral care teams and of the student support team. A deputy principal with specific responsibility for student care leads these various meetings very effectively, working with internal staff members and also liaising with outside agencies, seeking the best possible outcomes for students.

Very well-organised planning and testing practices are in place to support students entering first year who may or may not have been diagnosed as having additional educational needs (AEN) in their primary schools. The co-ordination of this support to students is performed with great commitment and effect. Commendable progress has been made by the AEN department this year in integrating e-learning supports into its testing practices and in training for students working with assistive technology. The significant change in the national model for allocating AEN resources to schools this year proffers the opportunity to create a core group of teachers who would deliver most of the support to students, supplemented by subject specialists where necessary. This would further strengthen individualised planning for students with AEN and would enable some team teaching arrangements, to target specific needs through time-bound initiatives.

A whole-school guidance plan is in place which describes the collaborative approach taken to the provision of guidance in the school. It is recommended that, in addition to the developmental priorities already identified in the guidance department's own documentation, survey feedback from students and parents on the guidance service also be evaluated, to help develop the service further. Short, medium, and long-term goals for the guidance service should be included in the school's strategic plan.

Numerous students play leadership roles in the school, including as student council representatives, as prefects, as mental health ambassadors, as charity fundraising organisers, as environmental leaders, and as subject option fair co-organisers. Student questionnaire responses indicated that most students feel proud to attend the school, get on well with other students in the school, and that they are getting on well with their school work. The questionnaire results also highlighted the fact that only a very small percentage of students agreed or strongly agreed that that they have a say in how things are done in the school. Periodically surveying student views on learning, future curriculum provision, and wellbeing issues is recommended. It will be important for school management to monitor issues surfacing in survey responses from different year groups, to ensure the planning and provision of differentiated supports, where necessary. Finally, student council representatives are currently individuals who offer themselves as volunteers, in combination with nomination and selection by teachers. It is suggested that a whole-school student council candidate application process be established, to enable the democratic election of candidates who will undertake the work of student council representation with diligence.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is

compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### **1.3. Management of facilities**

The facilities of the school, built in two phases and incorporating playing pitches and grounds, are very well maintained to the credit of the whole school community. Environmental responsibility is promoted as a school value through the ongoing work of the Green-Schools committee. The three workrooms for teachers who do not have a base classroom in the school are vital supports for those teachers. In recent years, separate canteen facilities in separate junior and senior general purpose areas, permanent sports changing rooms, and an outdoor courtyard have been developed to enhance students' experience of school life.

The volume of students moving around the school, particularly during class breaks was notable. Very orderly student behaviour was noted by inspectors at these times. However, as a result of the fact that the school is currently under pressure to serve its catchment area, its facilities cannot cater adequately for the entire student population during break-times, leading to numerous students sitting on corridors to eat their lunches. Also, insufficient storage facilities are available for gear bags, hurleys, and hockey sticks. Including these issues in the school's improvement plan is recommended, to evaluate how provision could be improved in the coming years, possibly as enrolments reduce slightly, when the new post-primary school sanctioned for the area opens from September 2018.

The school's dedicated e-learning team, led by a post-holder with significant expertise in the field, is demonstrating clear and effective leadership in this aspect of school life. The e-learning team is contributing to the development of teachers' collaborative practice by enabling subject departments to share their plans and resources using cloud computing. They are also enhancing student learning and the assessment of students' progress by providing peer-to-peer training to upskill colleagues and by sharing resources such as a spreadsheet template to support academic monitoring of students' progress by year heads. This is highly commended practice.

A review of the school's health and safety statement has been prioritised by the board for this year, in tandem with the ratification of a campus security policy for the school. Building on school culture where all staff report risks to the office immediately when identified, it is advised that the templates produced by the Health and Safety Authority in conjunction with its 2010 *Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health in Post-Primary Schools* be provided to all staff, for completion at an agreed time each year. Finally, advice was provided during the whole school evaluation in relation to the demarcation of safe zones around machines in some practical rooms.

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

### **2.1 The quality of learning and teaching**

Teachers' collective/collaborative practice is strengthened by the expectation that all subject department co-ordination and SSE subject link teacher roles rotate within departments. Based on the sample of subject department plans evaluated, plans ranged from fair to excellent quality. Where they differed in depth and quality, this was in relation to their effectiveness as a guide to a new teacher taking over a class group, to the level of detail agreed by the department to facilitate common

assessment practices, and the extent to which annual, targeted action planning for ongoing subject improvement was evident from the plan. As new junior cycle specifications are phased in for subjects, this will give focus and purpose to the ongoing development of subject department plans.

An exceptionally high standard of teaching practice was seen in a significant number of lessons and a good or very good standard of teaching was observed in almost all lessons. In those lessons, teachers were very well prepared and communicated high expectations to students. They employed effective questioning and differentiation supports specific to the needs of the cohort. They utilised varied methodologies to create a balance between teacher and student activity. This resulted in students' engagement and enjoyment becoming evident in their interactions with each other and with the teacher.

Some very good formative assessment practices were noted during highly effective lessons. Learning intentions which focused on specific knowledge, skills or understandings to be gained were shared with students at the outset of lessons and were used to check students' mastery during and at the end of the lesson. In a small number of lessons, success criteria linked to the learning intentions were provided to students. This enabled the students to assess their work or the work of their peers for strengths and areas for improvement and allowed teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the strengths and areas for development in a piece of work.

In the very few lessons where there was scope for improvement in teachers' individual practice, more active methodologies needed to be incorporated into lessons to create a greater balance between teacher and student activity. More digital/audio-visual supports needed to be used to support learning in some instances. Also, the learning intentions shared were not returned to during the lesson to check for student understanding or to help identify what the focus of the next lesson should be, where students were still struggling with the new concepts or skills introduced in the lesson observed.

Learning was good or very good in most lessons. An impressive general level of student self-motivation was noted in many lessons. Pair or group work activities planned for students progressed their learning when a purposeful, time-bound task was set, and where timeslot for gathering and sharing the feedback of the pairs/groups was incorporated, to strengthen the learning of all. Also, students' motivation to learn was strengthened noticeably by differentiation supports for the more able in some instances.

In the small number of lessons where the learner experience was satisfactory or fair, those lessons were characterised by weaknesses in planning or by an overemphasis on teacher talk. Where pair or group work opportunities were provided to students in those lessons, it was noted that they worked individually or that the management of feedback to support the learning of all was not effective. A greater exploration of the roles and responsibilities that need to be communicated to students for effective collaborative learning is recommended.

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

#### ***3.1 Management***

Very good progress has been made in relation to the two management-related recommendations made in a 2011 whole-school evaluation report, through the structures and CPD model that now drive



the school's engagement with SSE. The principal's sharing of findings and recommendations from inspection reports at staff meetings supports discussion and planning for whole-school improvement.

### ***3.2 Learning and teaching***

Good or very good progress has been made in relation to many of the individual recommendations made in three subject inspection reports that were conducted in the school since the 2011 whole-school evaluation. Two teaching and learning themes recurred in those subject inspections: more consistent integration of active and collaborative learning and of strategies to develop self and peer assessment among students. Based on the sample of lessons observed, partial or good progress was discerned in relation to those themes. This is a positive finding, since pedagogical change generally takes a longer time to achieve. Continuing the process of surveying students on their learning will help the school gauge its progress in this area.

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

The school has very high quality capacity for school improvement. This is largely due to the combination of strong management from the senior management team and the board, a highly-motivated teaching staff continually engaging in CPD, the ongoing support and development of very high quality teaching and learning as a key priority for school development, the work of volunteer curriculum leaders who are steering SSE, and a whole-school culture of openness to sharing practice.

Evidence gathered during the evaluation showed that SSE is positively impacting on student learning. Specific strategies for developing aspects of students' literacy and numeracy skills and attitudes were noted in lessons during the evaluation. Meeting minutes and schemes from subject departments testify that progress in relation to SSE targets is being regularly discussed by teachers. The introduction of SSE newsletters for parents and for staff communicates effectively the rationale for selected targets and actions in an innovative and empowering manner.

Of particular significance is the way the school has moved from implementing SSE as a required initiative to embracing it as a process for managing change in its self-identified priorities for teaching and learning development. As the school moves forward on its SSE journey, it will be important to ensure that where targets have been achieved and accepted as whole-school practices, that room is created for the prioritisation of new targets, including learning, curricular and student support areas.

## 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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <b>very good</b> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;