

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Abbey Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Abbey Rd Ferrybank Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76082H

Date of Evaluation: 14-11-2018



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

Dates of inspection	12,13,14 November 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with board of management• Meetings with principal and deputy principals• 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

Abbey Community College, Ferrybank, Waterford is a co-educational designated community college under the trusteeship of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) and the Sisters of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. The diverse cohort of students who attend the school come from urban and rural backgrounds. The school has a current enrolment of 921 students. In addition to the Junior Cycle, the school offers the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of leadership and management is very good; the board of management and the principal promote an inclusive and caring school community and a culture of continuous improvement for staff and students.
- The quality of care for students is very good; there is a high level of whole-school commitment to the wellbeing of students.
- The board and principal provide a curriculum which is generally broad and balanced and there is good provision overall, however, some aspects of curriculum planning, provision and timetabling will require review to better meet the needs of the full cohort of students.
- Some areas for development were noted; review of some posts and associated duties to better meet school needs and enhanced involvement of parents and students.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good; there were instances of exemplary practice; however, where learner experiences were less than good, students had limited opportunities to fully lead their own learning through discovery and inquiry.
- The effective implementation of some recommendations made in previous inspection reports is good; the level of engagement by the school in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is good overall; the school's capacity for improvement is very good.

Recommendations

- School management, in consultation with teachers, should put measures in place at a whole-school level to review and implement necessary changes in curricular provision and timetabling in order to better meet the needs of students in a changing school context.

- School management and teachers should review the duties attached to all posts of responsibilities so that they promote leadership of learning, are equitable in terms of responsibilities attached, and meet identified school needs.
- School management and other leaders in the school should work towards further involvement of parents in their children's education so that they can more fully contribute to their vital partnership and advisory role.
- Teachers and school management should put further measures in place to strengthen student voice both inside and outside the classroom.
- Teachers should plan for active student learning methodologies which enable students to lead their own learning through discovery and inquiry, to reflect on their progress and to have an increased awareness of how to improve through enhanced assessment practices.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The quality of leadership and management is very good; the board of management and the principal promote an inclusive and caring school community and a culture of continuous improvement for staff and students. Teachers are actively encouraged by school management to collaborate and to share their expertise. Purposeful teacher continuing professional development (CPD) in a wide range of areas is supported by school management and availed of by teachers. Teachers' willingness to participate in areas such as the shared vision group, the Magenta Principles, the digital strategy group and to act as facilitators for restorative practice, has led to improved teacher collaborative practices at whole-school level.

The board and principal provide a curriculum which is generally broad and balanced and there is good provision overall. However, some aspects of curriculum planning and provision and timetabling will require review. School management, in consultation with teachers, should put further measures in place at whole-school level to review and implement necessary changes in curricular provision and timetabling in order to better meet the needs of students in a changing school context. Junior Cycle curriculum review should be ongoing to include the provision of short courses and a student-centred curriculum. The introduction of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme should be progressed and current timetabling arrangements and provision for Physical Education (PE) should be prioritised.

The quality of care for students is very good overall. Dedicated teachers demonstrate very high levels of commitment to the care and wellbeing of students. Student support structures are well planned, organised and implemented. The student support team meets regularly to identify appropriate interventions required for particular students. The recent introduction of class tutors and timetabled tutor time each morning is working very successfully for students and teachers. The role of tutor and associated activities will require ongoing development. Supervised study and the homework club support students in their work. There is acknowledgement, awards and celebration of student achievement and endeavours.

There is a good induction programme for first-year students with an appropriate focus on rewarding positive behaviour. Wellbeing is timetabled for all first-year students and the wellbeing plan fosters a commitment to inclusion and the holistic development of each student. Students' holistic education, in line with the school's mission, is also developed through the range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Guidance provision is well developed and delivered at junior and senior cycle. The school has recently prioritised the development of a whole-school guidance plan which takes account of recent

curricular changes. Counselling is utilised successfully to support students who may be vulnerable or those with behavioural difficulties. The guidance section of the school website, together with specific information meetings and open night, support students and parents in making informed subject and programme choices.

The well-qualified learning support team works effectively with the student support team, year heads, class tutors, subject teachers, parents and school management to support students with identified learning needs and those who require support in English as an additional language (EAL). The school aims to meet the varied needs of the student cohort; those with high expectations, together with students requiring additional support or resource teaching. The continuum of support is being used to guide and support students at all levels. The special education needs (SEN) coordinator attends the weekly student support team meetings. Mainstream teachers are made aware of the needs of SEN students through thematic staff meetings and have good access to information on the needs of particular students. SEN provision is organised by withdrawal in small groups, individual withdrawal and some team teaching. However, team teaching provision could be further expanded to provide enhanced support for students. Students in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit and the Moderate General Learning Disability class are very well supported by dedicated and committed personnel. Students are integrated into mainstream where possible.

Managing the organisation

The board of management and the principal fulfil their responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security, wellbeing and inclusivity. The school plan lists current policies with dates for ratification and review where relevant. This is very good practice. The board is kept very well informed on school business by the principal through the comprehensive principal's report. The principal and deputy principals, who constitute the senior management team, foster a positive school climate, work effectively together and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Senior management actively supports school improvement by promoting a learning culture and implementing effective systems for communicating and sharing information.

The principal and deputy principals manage the school's organisational structures and human resources very well overall. It is praiseworthy that within the growing culture of collaborative review, the strategic school plan proposes that the principal will meet teachers annually to discuss their work and delegated responsibilities. Posts of responsibilities have been reviewed in line with Circular 3/2018 and Looking at Our School 2016. School management and teachers should further review the duties attached to all posts so that they promote leadership of learning, are equitable in terms of responsibilities attached, and meet identified school needs.

The newly appointed principal provides clear and substantial educational leadership, is aware of the school's changing and emerging needs, communicates effectively with staff, empowers staff to work in teams and to take on leadership roles and successfully delegates appropriate responsibilities. The deputy principals effectively support the principal on an ongoing basis, carry out many duties including leading teaching and learning and liaising with teachers, year heads, coordinators class tutors and parents. The senior management team's shared and delegated responsibilities are clearly outlined in the school plan.

The board of management maintains the school buildings and grounds to a very good standard. Classrooms and specialist rooms are effectively maintained by teachers and provide very good physical learning environments.

Leading school development

The trustees, board and principal are proactive in maintaining the guiding vision for the school, based on providing a centre for learning which promotes values, such as the development of the whole person, so that students can participate fully in society. Consideration should be given by the board to benchmarking the guiding vision against current good practice.

The board has overseen the development of the comprehensive school plan which contains all current policies and a school improvement section. The strategic plan outlines many areas including curriculum review, a whole-school approach to promoting positive behaviour, development of leadership capacity and policy development in areas of assessment and reporting. This plan should include more specific information regarding proposed curricular changes. In addition to the above, the board identified other priority areas that require attention including policy review to include a whole school inclusion policy, review of the admissions policy and a review of the code of behaviour to better promote a culture of positive discipline.

School leaders are aware of educational developments and use the SSE process with increasing effectiveness as a means of supporting curricular programmes and managing change. Those leading SSE are working to ensure improvement plans are put into action on a whole-school basis. The school improvement plan (SIP) focuses on ongoing implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework, integration of SEN into mainstream and support for an enhanced student voice. The SIP should place added focus on classroom practice.

The parents' association is actively involved in supporting the school. Some parents regularly attend school meetings and events and there is ongoing communication with school management. School management and other leaders in the school should work towards further developing partnership of parents in their children's education so that they can more fully contribute to their vital partnership and advisory role. Parents reported that they feel happy with the school, consider that the school is well run and that there is a good atmosphere in the school. However, questionnaire responses indicated that parents have some concerns regarding the school regularly seeking their views, advice when their child is choosing subjects and being informed of the details of the school's Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) policy.

The principal and other school leaders are building good relationships with other schools and with the wider community. For example, links have been forged locally with Foróige and Pieta House and Abbey Community College is an Ambassador School for Cycle Against Suicide.

Developing leadership capacity

Staff engage in regular professional dialogue in order to develop their practice. There is an increasing culture of self-reflection among staff and a willingness to work individually and collaboratively on areas of practice that require improvement. School leaders, including the board, the senior management team and teachers, have availed of professional development and training. Expertise is shared; teachers who are involved in various initiatives, programmes, CPD activities and working groups present to their peers. The school has developed a good e-learning plan which outlines how a shared and uniform learning platform can benefit teacher sharing and student participation.

New members of staff are effectively supported through peer mentoring. Professional Masters of Education students are facilitated with school placements and are supported by co-operating teachers. Newly qualified teachers are supported through the Droichead process and a cohort of staff are trained as professional support team members.

Year heads monitor student progress, attendance and punctuality, communicate with parents as necessary, effectively oversee the welfare of their year groups and reported that they are very well supported in this regard by senior management. This work is supported at whole-school level by the class tutors, guidance counsellors, home school liaison and the chaplain.

Opportunities are provided for students to assume leadership roles, such as through the student council and the school council. School management and teachers value students' views and support their involvement in relevant decision making, for example, on occasion, the school council is invited to address the board. Senior prefects are involved in the Meitheal programme and act as mentors to first-year students. Responses from student questionnaires and interactions with students recognise that they are proud to be in this school, but also highlight the need to place increased emphasis on

having a say in how things are done and better advice when choosing subjects. These areas merit further investigation.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learner outcomes and experiences

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; the majority of lessons were very good or good while in a significant minority of lessons satisfactory practice was observed. In a few lessons the quality of teaching and learning was exemplary. In these lessons independent, experiential and self-directed student learning was facilitated by teachers. In the majority of lessons teachers created a stimulating learning environment, set appropriately challenging tasks that encouraged active and enjoyable student engagement. Learning was less successful in a small number of lessons where teacher instruction prevailed and the teaching methodology used was not varied.

Collaborative learning was a feature of many lessons where students worked in pairs or groups. In some lessons, teachers structured very effective group tasks wherein students presented outcomes to their peers who reviewed and gave feedback on the presentation. To further enhance students' learning, oracy and confidence, opportunities for students to role play, debate, question each other and present their work to the class should be incorporated into lessons, where appropriate.

Expectations of students were very high and student engagement in learning activities was very good overall. Classroom management was effective and interactions between students and teachers were respectful and positive in almost all lessons. In some classrooms, the group seating arrangement facilitated co-operative learning activities. In the small number of lessons where there was evidence of student interruption in lessons, it was skilfully managed by the teacher.

A review of outcomes in certificate examinations indicated good uptake of higher level and good levels of achievement in a number of subject areas. In some subject areas an in-depth analysis of outcomes in certificate examinations is required to address lower levels of achievement. The planned introduction of a tracking and monitoring system to support students' academic progress and to inform staff about the ability of their students will further support students academically.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Almost all lessons were very well planned and structured, in a small number of instances the restructuring of tasks would have benefitted student learning. Learning intentions were used to frame most lessons observed. In a few lessons, students were referred to success criteria to make judgements about the quality of their learning. In some lessons, the learning intentions were revisited to assess student learning, this and the use of success criteria should be replicated by all teachers so that students are more aware of their strengths and of the areas they need to develop.

Most teachers used an appropriate range of teaching methodologies and delivered good quality instruction that ensured there was an appropriate balance between their own input and productive student participation and response.

In almost all lessons, teachers made deliberate efforts to ensure that students understood and used subject-specific keywords and language. In some language lessons, the use of the target language was very good, while in others strategies to increase students' confidence in speaking the language was required.

In a few lessons, teachers gave students autonomy over their learning so that teachers became enablers of highly effective student learning. Opportunities for numeracy development in lessons were generally good. In a lesson where student autonomy was in evidence, a highly numerate learning environment prevailed; an excellent practical everyday approach of the use of mathematical concepts and language was adopted; while in some lessons further opportunities to enhance students' numeracy skills were necessary.

Information and communication technology (ICT) was very successfully used in many lessons, with audio visual clips, electronic sharing platforms, presentations and visuals used to enhance learning. In some lessons, which were conducted in a computer room, students' own ICT skills were also developed. Commendably, some teachers are using virtual learning environments as a mechanism to support out-of-class student learning.

The quality of questioning strategies observed in the majority of lessons was very good. Effective practice was noted in lessons where teachers asked directed rather than global questions and where questions were differentiated and encouraged students to explain their responses. This practice should be expanded. In most lessons, student homework was assigned and corrected through peer and whole-class teacher correction. In general, students received good levels of oral feedback in the lessons observed, however, there was limited evidence of written formative feedback from teachers on students' written work. It is recommended that a whole-school approach to providing written formative developmental comment on significant homework and assignments be introduced to ensure that students' efforts are both validated and progressed.

The overall quality of subject department planning is good, with most plans offering very good detail in terms of subject provision and whole school approaches to literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. A number of subject areas provided very good curriculum plans. Commendably many subject departments have adapted Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) resource materials in planning for their subject in the new Junior Cycle Framework. There were some subject curriculum plans that require further development. It is recommended that all subject departments ensure that schemes of work are updated in line with best practice.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

The effective implementation of some recommendations made in previous inspection reports is good; there has been limited progress with other recommendations. The school's RSE policy has been updated and reviewed. Subject department collaboration regarding planning and development of schemes of work has improved. SSE has been somewhat integrated into this process. Sharing of resources has been streamlined using a common digital platform. School management has made substantial progress in deployment of teachers to PE, however, provision and timetabling of PE requires further improvement. The development of ICT has progressed; further planning for its full integration into teaching and learning will be necessary.

Teaching and Learning

Very good teaching and learning practice was observed in many lessons. There has been more effective use of the target language where appropriate, an investigative approach to Science has been integrated into planning, and there has been whole-school and classroom-based support for literacy and numeracy initiatives. There should be increased student activity leading to improved ownership and responsibility of learning in some lessons. Teaching and learning areas that still require development include improved assessment practices with provision of written formative feedback, improved homework assignment and higher-order questioning.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

Currently wellbeing is planned as a whole-school SSE strategy. CPD in this area was provided for all staff in 2018. Wellbeing modules including Nutrition, Music Appreciation and 'Friends for Life' are currently focused on first-year students. Wellbeing forms part of tutor time for all students each morning. Engagement by school management and teachers in SSE is good. There is commitment to the SSE process and its links to the implementation of the new Junior Cycle curriculum as reflected in school planning documentation. Literacy and numeracy actions at whole-school level have been ongoing, however there should be a higher level of visibility of these actions in classroom practice. The school's shared vision group has contributed substantially to the identification and implementation of SSE actions and the formulation of the SIP. Looking at Our School 2016 has been largely integrated into SSE planning. Recent SSE focus has been on differentiation, inclusivity, student voice, resilience and wellbeing.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school's capacity for improvement is very good. Staff involvement in CPD and sharing of expertise is of a very high standard. There is a very good awareness of the school's changing needs and a strong commitment by school management and teachers to respond to these changes. There is very effective practice regarding capacity building and empowerment among school management and teachers. A self-reflective culture of review has been established in the school.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management welcomes this very positive and affirming WSE-MLL report, as it identifies many of the key strengths of Abbey Community College. We welcome the acknowledgement of the quality of leadership and management and teaching and learning in our school. The board would like to acknowledge the many positives outlined in the report and the many areas of highly effective practice in Abbey Community College.

In particular the board of management notes the following:

- The very high quality of leadership and management; the board of management and the principal promote an inclusive and caring school community and a culture of continuous improvement for staff and students.
- The broad and balanced curriculum provided across a wide range of subjects that is offered to students.
- The principal and the deputy principals manage the school's organisational structures and human resources very well overall.
- The very good quality of care for students with dedicated teachers demonstrating very high levels of care and commitment to the care and wellbeing of all students.
- The trustees, board and principal are proactive in maintaining the guiding vision for the school based on a centre which promotes values such as the development of the whole person, so that students can fully participate in society.
- The quality of teaching and learning identified as good or very good in the majority of lessons and in a few lessons it was identified as exemplary.
- The very effective practice regarding capacity building and empowerment among school management and teachers.

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

The board of management is committed to addressing the recommendations contained in the report and these will inform the developmental work programme of the board for the coming school years. The recommendations are welcome and when fully implemented will further improve the quality of teaching and learning in Abbey Community College.

Work to address these recommendations has already commenced and the board will continue to take an active part in leading and supporting and successful implementation of these recommendations.

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;