

**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>	Maria Immaculata Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Dunmanway Co Cork
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	76086P

**Date of Evaluation: 17-10-2019**



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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

Date of inspection	17-10-2019
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

Maria Immaculata Community College is a co-educational school under the joint trusteeship of the Diocese of Cork and Ross and Cork Education and Training Board (ETB). The school was established in 2002 and the school building is part of the pilot Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme. It offers the Junior Cycle, an (optional) Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). There is a current enrolment of 503 students.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The quality of school leadership and management is very good; a small number of school policies are in need of review.
- Care structures are comprehensive and of a very high quality.
- Good work has been done in the area of student voice; potential exists for this area to be further developed.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with scope to develop assessment practice and to build on current good practice in the area of digital learning.
- There has been good implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.
- Very good work has been done in the area of school self-evaluation and the school has very good capacity for improvement.

#### Recommendations

- The board of management should reinvigorate the policy review process, prioritising a number of policies highlighted in this report, particularly those relating to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and the code of behaviour.
- The school should develop a whole-school assessment policy linked to recent developments in assessment at both system and school level.
- Building on good work already underway, further arrangements to advance the place of student voice, particularly with regard to learning, should be made.
- A digital learning plan should be developed which will support the use of digital technology as a key tool for students to support their own learning.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

The quality of school leadership and management is very good.

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

The quality of leadership for learning is very good. The principal and deputy principal have been appointed to their roles in the last year and form a very good team. There is evidence of significant dedication to the school on the part of the senior leadership team, along with proactive efforts to enhance teaching and learning. In the context of the very good work currently underway, it is suggested that a set time might be agreed for the senior leadership team to undertake strategy meetings on a regular basis.

A very broad curriculum is provided for students. The school has been innovative in a number of areas, particularly through its engagement in the first phase of the new Leaving Certificate Physical Education (PE) syllabus. In addition, the school has sought to enhance its provision for students with special educational needs through the incorporation of Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs).

Students in Junior Cycle are organised in mixed ability groupings in the main, with a well-thought out plan to effectively provide support for students with additional needs in mainstream lessons through team-teaching. All students participate in the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).

Provision for students in Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) is appropriate. A senior cycle course in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is delivered in modular format in each year of senior cycle and a draft RSE policy has been developed. It is recommended that the board prioritise the ratification of this policy at the earliest possible opportunity. Provision for PE is very good overall. However, due to timetabling decisions, students participating in the LCVP have access to only one lesson of PE per week. This will need to be addressed.

Up to now, students in first year have made a number of subject choices prior to entry to the school. However, the implementation of a taster programme is planned from the next academic year. This will provide students with the opportunity to experience a wide range of subjects prior to making subject choices for their Junior Cycle. In TY, students are provided with the opportunity to sample a wide variety of subjects before they make their subject choices for fifth year. Good practice in this area is further bolstered through the use of an 'open choice' system, where option blocks are generated based on student choice.

A very good TY programme is in place. This incorporates a variety of assessment modes and a wide range of events is organised each year, including external learning experiences and visiting speakers. A comprehensive plan for the LCVP has been developed, with a programme co-ordinator appointed. The teachers of the programme meet a number of times each year and links with businesses and other groups in the community have been pursued.

A co-ordinator for the implementation of the new Junior Cycle curriculum has been appointed. In addition, the school has begun to review its assessment arrangements, as is required by circular letter 0055/2019. A wellbeing co-ordinator is in place and has begun to review provision for this area of Junior Cycle.

The school has very good links with its feeder primary schools and places appropriate emphasis on transition arrangements for first year students. In addition, comprehensive assessment arrangements are in place to ensure that students' needs are effectively identified and provided for. These include the administration of a standardised ability test prior to entry, and standardised reading and mathematics tests in the September of students' first year in the school. It is suggested

that further use be made of results of students' ability tests as a means of supporting care structures in the school, but also as a means of analysing and targeting the achievement of each student cohort.

During the evaluation, the area of assessment was raised by a number of staff, along with challenges posed by the new Junior Cycle curriculum. In this context, it is recommended that the school should develop a whole-school assessment policy linked to recent developments in assessment at both system and school level. Key items to consider include the use of assessment information derived from standardised tests, the continued development of a manageable assessment calendar, and the place of inclusion in all forms of assessment and task design.

Care structures are comprehensive and of a very high quality. Both a pastoral care team meeting and a student support team meeting, comprising key care and leadership personnel, are held every week. The School Completion Programme (SCP) provides a very worthwhile additional care outlet, supporting at-risk students in continuing to engage with education. An additional, worthwhile element of the school's care is the regular assemblies and meetings with tutors which incorporate particular themes for instruction each week.

A comprehensive whole-school guidance plan is in place. The plan includes the vocational, personal, and educational areas of student support. It also sets out the roles of school personnel, along with a wide range of guidance activities, including regular guidance lessons for specific year groups. A complementary document delineating the role of the school chaplain is of a very good quality. A critical incident plan is also in place and is regularly reviewed.

It is in the context of these very good care structures that it is recommended that the school conduct a review of the current code of behaviour. This should be undertaken to ensure clarity among students, not alone with regard to the behaviour expected of them, but also regarding the support and care available to them. The code should frontload key positive interventions that the school has in place to support students, while also addressing a ladder of sanctions for misbehaviour.

The school strives to be inclusive and provides very high quality support for students with additional educational needs. There are two special classes, one for students with autism spectrum difference (ASD) and another for students with multiple disabilities. Co-ordinating teachers for the special classes and for mainstream support are in place and a core team of special education teachers has been established. This core team of teachers is very committed and works very effectively to organise provision for the students identified.

Special classroom environments are well developed and plans are underway to develop a sensory space for students. It is positive that teaching in these classes focuses on students' specific and individual needs and interventions and strategies specific to ASD are utilised. Teachers have accessed CPD in L2LPs through the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service and practice in the provision of the programme is developing. In this context, further supports should be sought and accessed so that students are purposefully included in as many mainstream lessons with their peers as is appropriate to their individual profiles of strengths and needs.

Currently, a high proportion of teachers provide support for students identified with additional and special educational needs. This should be kept under review so that support for individual students is not fragmented across many different teachers.

The school has had a significant increase in the overall number of additional educational needs within the current first year cohort. It has been challenging to plan and to organise supports to meet all students' needs in the context of a slightly reduced adjustment in the teaching hours the school receives for special educational needs (SEN). It is noteworthy that special needs assistants work well as part of the SEN team and their work, as observed, was very good in supporting students in the special classes.

The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome and is among the standards outlined in the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as it can provide invaluable benefits for all members in the school community.

### **Managing the organisation**

There is good management of the organisation. Members of the board of management provide valuable and committed service to the school. There are regular board meetings and an agreed report is communicated to the teaching staff and parents. The board has overseen the ratification of almost all required policies.

Regular reports with regard to incidents of bullying are made to the board. It is recommended that the board should now ensure that the anti-bullying policy is regularly reviewed, as is required by, and outlined in, the relevant guidelines. In addition, the policy should be available for review on the school website.

A clear and inclusive admissions policy is in place. In light of responses to a parent questionnaire distributed as part of the evaluation, it is important that the school review all documentation related to enrolment to ensure that the voluntary nature of any fees is explicitly stated. An attendance strategy is also in place and this should be revised in light of recent changes in the school's approach to this area.

Management of school facilities is very good. The school presents as a well-ordered, welcoming learning environment with a very high standard of equipment and facilities. It is positive that the school is currently beginning to work on developing additional digital resources. Very regular risk assessments with regard to the building are undertaken as a support for health and safety.

### **Leading school development**

Leadership of school development is good. A number of priorities have been identified by the board, including the forthcoming ending of the PPP contract regarding the school building, the embedding of the new Junior Cycle curriculum, the implementation of a taster programme in first year, and the development of the use of digital technologies. A need to review and update existing school policies has also been identified. This is positive and it is recommended that the school's 'carousel' approach to policy review should be reinvigorated, with key policies for in-depth review identified each year.

A parents' council is in place. The council has regular meetings and the senior management team attends all meetings. Findings from the questionnaires distributed to parents during the evaluation, would suggest that the council should advance current discussions regarding the use of both the school website and social media to communicate with the wider parent body.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

Development of leadership capacity is very good overall. Evidence of a distributed approach to leadership was observed through contributions from a number of staff groups, along with timetabled opportunities for assistant principals, year heads and other groups to meet. A review of the post structure has recently been completed and this was supported by the board.

The school is very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). In addition, a significant number of teachers are involved in voluntary groups for additional initiatives. Not least among these is the area of extracurricular activities, which excited very positive comment on the part of students during a focus group held as part of this evaluation. The extent to which staff believe their views are sought and acted upon with regard to decision-making was very clear through extremely positive responses to questionnaires distributed to teachers by the inspection team.

A student council is in place and regular meetings are organised. The council is made up of fifth year students. Other class groups appoint class captains who may attend some student council meetings. A range of other supports is in place to support the area of student voice. However, in the context of findings from student questionnaire responses and an interview with a student focus group, it is recommended that further arrangements to advance the place of student voice be made. Membership of the student council should be extended to include all year groups. Beyond this, opportunities to communicate actions taken as a result of student inputs should be actively sought out. The board should regularly liaise with the student council, while regular meetings between the council and the Parents' Council should be advanced. Further clarity for students with regard to the place of the student council in the overall management and governance structure of the school might also be provided.

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

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment is very good overall. In a small number of instances, areas for development were identified by inspectors and these incorporated the enhancement of group work activities through more structured approaches, along with a need for greater balance between teacher and student talk.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

The quality of learner outcomes and experiences was very good. Lessons were characterised by very good relationships between teachers and students. This was also evident in the behaviour of students towards their peers, where they were respectful and well-mannered.

Students displayed capacity to work together in many lessons. They were frequently provided with opportunities to work together in groups or pairs. In almost all instances, these groups worked well as a means of advancing student learning. However, in a number of lessons, there was a need for greater balance between student and teacher talk. In addition, the potential for the adoption of more sophisticated group and pair structures in organising student learning was observed. It is suggested that, building on good practice already present in classrooms, a focus on the further development of co-operative learning would be worthwhile. Such strategies would facilitate students' ability to access prior learning through wait-time, enhance already good student confidence in learning through error, and would greatly enhance teachers' capacity to formatively assess student learning during lessons.

In a number of lessons, students were expected to employ subject-specific terms in oral interactions with their teachers. This focus on the development of student voice in their own learning was very worthwhile and incorporated the modelling of this language by teachers and its inclusion in the learning environment. In language lessons, target language was used very effectively to support student learning and this was reflected in activities organised.

Students displayed very good capacity to engage with the evaluation of their own work in a number of lessons and, in one instance, this was of an exemplary standard. In these lessons, students were provided with models of practice by their teachers, clear instruction and demonstrations, along with effective and frequent formative feedback on their subsequent efforts. In addition, students co-created success criteria regarding their work with their teachers. Ultimately, this led to the enhancement of students' understanding of quality in the subject. This underpinned action on their part for similar tasks in the future. The sharing of teacher expertise in this area is important for the school to grasp in the context of its current SSE focus and teachers' overall collective practice. The use of a visualiser in this context is recommended as a further potential support for the development of students' assessment literacy in the classroom.

Digital learning technology was used by teachers in a number of lessons. However, overall, student engagement with digital learning technology in lessons was limited. This finding is supported by student responses in questionnaires distributed during the evaluation. In this context, it is recommended that a digital learning plan be developed which will support the use of digital technology not only as a resource for teaching, but as a key tool for students to support their own learning in the classroom. The school is well-placed to engage with such planning. Most importantly, such a plan should focus on how learners can most effectively engage with new technology and how this might be most effectively embedded in teaching and learning.

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

Teachers' individual and collective practice is very good. In all lessons, teacher preparation was of a very high standard. Classroom management was very good. Lessons were clearly structured in all instances. Very frequently, teachers' love of their subjects and subject expertise were very clear. In a number of lessons, this translated to a palpably high level of motivation and enjoyment on the part of students.

Learning intentions were frequently used in lessons and added clarity to the learning underway. Where this worked best, teachers incorporated key skills to be addressed in the lesson and used the learning intentions as a tool for recapitulating the work which had been undertaken during the lesson. In all lessons, students were clear with regard to the learning to be achieved that day.

Teachers used questioning very effectively in most instances to make links with prior learning and to support students in adding to this learning. It was also used as a means of recapitulating material, and checking for understanding. In very good lessons, questioning was utilised to clarify the learning underway for students.

Many learning environments were very well developed. Student work and educational posters were frequently displayed and used to support student learning. In addition, the display of subject-specific vocabulary to support student literacy was often evident. It is suggested that further expansion of the type of vocabulary displayed in classrooms to address the development of students' capacity to evaluate work in the subject might also be considered. In most classrooms, seating arrangements had been adopted to facilitate students working together.

The subject-planning process is well-established. Currently, subject plans are being transferred to a digital environment. This is positive, but it is important that this process facilitate ease of access to resources, along with the maintenance of the plans' character as working documents. Where departmental planning worked best, very strong collaborative work had been undertaken in using learning outcomes to develop manageable and clear plans for student learning. In a review of the plans, best practice was observed where the SSE process had been incorporated in a specific section of the subject plan, along with developmental action planning for the subject. All subject plans should adopt this approach.

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

There has been good implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.

### **Leadership and Management**

The school has largely enacted recommendations from previous evaluations. Reports are shared with, and discussed by, the board. It is suggested that, as a means of underpinning the use of inspection reports to advance school improvement, a system should be put in place for sharing the learning from inspection reports, and for responding to reports at board level.



### **Teaching and Learning**

There was clear evidence during the evaluation that recommendations dealing with the area of teaching and learning have been considered and acted upon.

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

The school's self-evaluation work (SSE) is very good and the school has a very good capacity for improvement.

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

Very good work has been undertaken in the area of SSE. The school has engaged with each cycle of SSE. Teaching and learning, with links to SSE, appears regularly as an item on the agendas for staff meetings. A new area for investigation and development, effective feedback, has recently been identified. Significant baseline data has been collated, comprising both qualitative and quantitative data.

A school report and school improvement plan have been developed and it is recommended that these should be shared with the school community. In addition, in order to enhance the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-linked) aspects of the plan, and to aid effective monitoring and evaluation of the process, targets should be identified with regard to learner outcomes or learner experiences.

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

The school has very good capacity for improvement. There is evidence of an evaluative culture, alongside very significant structures which will support it on this ongoing journey.

## The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <i>outstanding</i> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	<i>Good</i> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	<i>Fair</i> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	<i>Weak</i> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

The Board of MICC welcomes this extremely positive WSE-MLL report and commends all the stakeholders involved for their commitment to our school.

We are pleased that the report affirms the highly effective practices in the school which include:

- The care structures in place being comprehensive and of high quality.
- The very good quality teaching and learning evident in the school.
- Our ability to reflect on our work through the school self-evaluation process and our capacity to improve and develop on this.

The board is also pleased with the commentary on the promotion of student voice within our college and our continuing work on implementing recommendations from previous inspection reports.

## **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 ensuring that the recommendations as outlined in the report are acted upon:

- All of our existing policies will continue to be reviewed and updated with a carousel approach.
- Our Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy has been redrafted and is in the process of being ratified.
- In light of recent changes at national and local level, we are developing a whole-school assessment policy with input from relevant stakeholders.
- We have begun discussions with our Student Council as to how we can further promote and develop student voice within our college.
- Following a recent audit of our existing digital technology resources, we are implementing a plan to update our hardware, where required. In consultation with students involved in the Leaving Certificate Physical Education Programme, we will further develop our digital learning plan to support student learning throughout the school.