

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Coláiste Bhaile Chláir
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Claregalway County Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76233C

Date of Evaluation: 22-01-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

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

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

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.

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 the checks with the exception of 5 above in so far as a child protection oversight report had been presented to the board but it needed to also be appended to the minutes. The school has subsequently furnished evidence of total compliance with all aspects of these requirements.

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	8 - 22 January 2019
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• Meeting with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning in twenty-four lessons (lessons are fifty-eight minutes in duration)• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers

School context

Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Claregalway is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and is participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. It was established in 2013 and its enrolment has grown rapidly; currently, there are 1075 students enrolled. The school provides the Junior Cycle programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied programme, Leaving Certificate and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, and has a unit for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The unique character of the school is exemplified by the manner in which its development has been progressed through exceptional dedication, professionalism and collaboration of the board and senior management.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is exceptionally high; the senior leadership team works to a highly effective level and is supported by the dedication and commitment of teachers who play a very valuable leadership role throughout the school.
- A positive learning environment is provided and the quality of care for students is very good, supported by well-developed in-school systems for student support.
- The overall quality of teaching and of learning is very good; there was scope to improve aspects of learner autonomy and assessment in some lessons.
- There has been a good level of progress in the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations; there is scope to further improve the collective implementation of written formative assessment and to develop strategies to have greater student involvement in the assessment process.
- The school has a very good self-evaluation (SSE) process and very good capacity for improvement, with data-informed actions related to learning and care that are innovative and impactful; data gathered during the evaluation identified the need to place increased emphasis on developing student voice.

Recommendations

- All teachers should further promote learner autonomy during lessons and make greater use of formative assessment as a means of encouraging students to reflect on and to improve the quality of their learning; a whole-school assessment policy will support this.
- Student leadership has been prioritised by the school as an area to enhance, and this is recommended; areas to inform this work should include investigating ways to involve students to a greater extent in teaching, learning and assessment and in the operation of the school.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is exceptionally high. The senior management team works in a highly effective manner and comprises a principal and three deputy principals. This team is very well supported by the dedication and commitment of teachers and a middle-management team who play a very valuable leadership role throughout the school.

Leading learning and teaching

The board of management and senior management team (SMT) work to promote a very positive learning culture and a culture of improvement that supports teaching and learning. The SMT takes primary responsibility for leading teaching and learning and meets annually with all subject departments to review the progress made in the previous year and to discuss plans for the coming academic year. The SMT has also overseen the implementation of strategies to enhance teaching and learning recently, such as the use of instructional leadership, team teaching and peer mentoring and observation. The school operates in a progressive manner with a focus on continuously improving students' learning experiences. Going forward, the SMT should extend the range of approaches used to ensure that SSE strategies related to teaching and learning are embedded in classroom practices, including the enhancement of assessment practice and further embedding the use of digital technology.

The mission statement of promoting the holistic development of students is reflected in the school's formal and informal curriculum. A broad curriculum is provided and a wide range of subjects is offered to students. Staff are to be highly commended for their efforts that facilitate students' personal development beyond the classroom. The school has placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that its recruitment processes identify the most suitable teaching staff for its particular needs. The SMG encourages and supports staff to attend CPD courses and to pursue further professional studies, and teachers have engaged positively.

A good-quality optional TY programme has a significant uptake among students. Currently, a number of subject plans in TY are disproportionately focused on the leaving certificate syllabus. The current TY plan should be reviewed and revised in line with Circular M1/00 and the Department's TY guidelines.

To encourage students' participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), STEM is offered as a short course in junior cycle. Planning for this is very good and students reported that this course complements and helps build connections between junior cycle Mathematics and Science.

The Wellbeing programme is a particular strength in the school. The programme encompasses timetabled lessons in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), and personal development, as well as a weekly tutor period. Class tutors play an important role in the everyday care of students. It is commended that class tutors usually teach the class to which they are assigned and remain as tutor for a number of years, thereby enabling them to build strong relationships with the students. A wide range of supplementary initiatives and activities is provided to support and enhance the Wellbeing programme including whole-school initiatives such as the anti-bullying and wellbeing ambassador programme.

Care and support for students are of a very high quality. Very comprehensive structures, including an email support system, a *check-and-connect* programme and weekly care team meetings, ensure that maximum support is targeted towards the students who require it. There is appropriate sharing of information with general staff, although an expansion on the current in-out system is advised.

Support for students with special educational needs (SEN) is very well organised and coordinated by SEN anchors for each year group. A comprehensive SEN policy has been developed and systems to track students' progress have been introduced in line with the continuum of support. One-to-one, small-group settings and, more recently, in-class team teaching support are employed. Students who attend the ASD unit are included in mainstream lessons, where possible, and the school works to ensure that their educational and whole-school experiences help build social, emotional and academic skills in as inclusive a manner as possible. Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LP) are in place; teachers reported that students are responding well to this tailored approach.

There is an effective system of induction for first-year students and good links are made with the local primary schools. In addition, sixth-year students, who receive training the previous year, act as mentors to first-year classes and support their transition.

The school is participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and a plan based on the projected uptake of students to participate in the Scheme has been developed. The school and GRETB need to explore further strategies to successfully fulfil the criteria required for recognition as a Gaeltacht school, taking account of the particular sociolinguistic context of the school and the additional resources provided by the Department to support the implementation process.

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

Managing the organisation

The principal has a proactive management style, and the use of budgets and other resources are constantly monitored to ensure that they are aligned closely with identified learning priorities and the school's strategic plan. The SMT works as a highly effective and collaborative management unit;

it successfully manages and oversees the smooth day-to-day running of the school with shared and rotating responsibilities. The responses by parents, teachers and students to Inspectorate questionnaires indicate very strong satisfaction with the work of school management.

The school operates as an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment through the combined efforts of senior management, the ancillary staff, teachers, and the student body. The school has been adhering to the GRETB health and safety policy but has identified the need to draft its own policy unique to its situation; this is a worthwhile action. A working group of teachers has been established to facilitate this work. In addition to the formulation of this policy, a review of risk assessments should be conducted at least annually by each subject department in line with Health and Safety Authority guidelines.

An admissions policy is in place. The internal admission criteria to programmes such as TY, LCA and LCVP should be reviewed and outlined clearly. The code of behaviour has a good balance between rewards for positive behaviour and sanctions. There is a clear structure and ladder of referral. Responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire in relation to teachers' and students' perceptions of how the code of behaviour is implemented indicate that a review of current practices would be beneficial to support the teachers' work in achieving consistency in applying the code.

An excellent website provides up-to-date news about events, extra-curricular and co-curricular successes and hosts curriculum information. The school's electronic software system is used extensively to communicate, collaborate, create resources and record attendance and student behaviour. Personal tablets have been introduced into classroom practice in junior cycle. A digital learning plan has been developed and, appropriately, it sets out strategic actions with regard to key areas such as leadership and planning, digital technology in the curriculum, professional development, infrastructure and the nurturing of a whole-school e-learning culture. The next phase of the plan should focus on extending the use of digital technology into teaching, learning and assessment.

The board of management and principal are aware of their statutory obligations, and work to ensure that all legislative and policy requirements are met. A further focus for concerted action should be to ensure compliance with Circular Letter M29/95 as, due to the staggered start for various year groups at the outset of the academic year, the minimum 167 teaching days are not provided for all classes.

Leading school development

The board and senior management team are committed to ensuring that the school develops to meet the needs of the students and the school community. The principal approaches the management of change in a collaborative, flexible and sensitive manner. Strategic planning is well advanced; a high-quality strategic plan identifies eight areas of current focus. Each member of the senior management team has two areas of responsibility to lead and manage, in conjunction with the middle-management team. This approach is indicative of very effective distributed leadership practice.

There is a very good induction programme for new teachers which includes lesson observation, discussions about teaching and learning, and provision of resources including an excellent staff handbook and 'Know your school document'. It is commendable that new members of staff, and staff taking on new roles, are mentored by the SMT. Additional assistant principal (AP) posts have

been established recently and these align well to the strategic plan with a key focus on improving teaching and learning.

The parents' association is very committed to supporting the school, and parents surveyed were very positive about the school. The board has established practices for reporting on the operation of the school to the parents' association and staff. The wider parent body is kept informed about general school activities and events through the use of text messaging and the school website. To further enhance communication, the board should consider issuing a written agreed report after meetings and an annual report to the community informing all parents of matters relating to the operation and performance of the school. Parents' responses to the Inspectorate questionnaire indicated that the school should seek parental views to a greater extent; this is a goal already identified by the school in its own strategic plan.

Very constructive relationships and links have been established with the local community and a range of relevant agencies and local primary schools; this deliberate action has served to further embed the school within the community.

Developing leadership capacity

The SMT works very effectively to promote the development of leadership capacity of the staff and students. Staff teams and working groups have been formed to lead development in key areas such as strategic planning and health and safety. Independent of the post structure, staff are also encouraged to take on leadership roles, in areas such as subject co-ordination, non-curricular co-ordination and as tutors.

The school is committed to ensuring that students play an active and participative role in school life. Amongst the many opportunities for them to assume leadership roles are the student council, the mentoring programme, head boy and girl, class captains and the *Model United Nations* programme. During the evaluation, discussions with students as well as feedback from Inspectorate questionnaires indicated a number of areas where the school could further develop students' participation and contribution to school development. These areas include, inside the classroom, where students should be encouraged to gain greater ownership and responsibility for their learning and, outside the classroom, where increased opportunities could be provided for students to engage in decision making and policy formation and review. The assignment of a middle-management post for the promotion of 'values development through school leadership' is indicative of the school's commitment in this area.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and of learning was very good. All lessons were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Learning activities were well managed and a very good rapport was evident between all teachers and their students.

Learner outcomes and experiences

While the quality of learning was very good overall, elements of good and satisfactory practice were also evident. A minority of lessons had scope for improvement specifically regarding the integration of student-centred approaches where teacher input was the dominant strategy. Teachers should further promote learner autonomy and student participation during lessons and make greater use of formative assessment as a means of encouraging students to reflect on and to improve the quality of their learning.

Learning intentions were identified in most lessons and in the highly effective lessons these intentions were referenced throughout the lesson and were linked to success criteria. In some lessons, the key word strategy was seamlessly integrated into the lesson and supported the shared learning intention and this had positive learner outcomes.

Very good practice was seen where digital technology was integrated with the planned learning; for example, where photographs of students' notes were used for plenary sessions after group work. To advance on such good work, digital technology could also be utilised to record demonstrations; for example, to assist students who are absent from class on the day and to support differentiation by facilitating students to review the demonstration in their own time and to reinforce learning.

Homework was set and monitored in most lessons. Very valuable peer-evaluation activities were utilised in some lessons with evidence of teachers providing high-quality oral feedback to students. The provision of regular, constructive and developmental written feedback in students' copybooks remains an area for development for the school. The development of a whole-school assessment policy is recommended to formalise practices around formative feedback and to support the revised assessment practices in junior cycle.

Many of the recommendations associated with teaching and learning were identified by the school through their SSE process.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

The overall quality of teaching is very good; practice ranged from highly effective in the majority to satisfactory in a small number of lessons.

Teacher explanations and instructions were clear in lessons. In almost all lessons, a good variety of methodologies was used. Very good use was made of mind maps, Venn diagrams, place mats and brainstorming activities to support active engagement.

Questioning was the dominant assessment strategy observed; best practice was evident when the questions posed enabled students to apply and evaluate information with their peers. There were, however, a small number of lessons where the questions resulted in information recall alone. All teachers should ensure that there is an appropriate balance between global and directed questioning or between higher and lower questioning so that all students are challenged appropriately.

Teachers' individual planning in the majority of lessons was of a high standard. Supplementary resources were prepared in advance and, in the best cases, considerable thought had gone into how activities could be structured in a way that would advance the learning of all students in the class. In some cases, there was a need to plan for a greater range of activities to cater more fully for the range of abilities and learning styles.

Digital technology is used very efficiently as a collaboration tool and very good collective practices are taking place. It is evident that there is a lot of informal and formal sharing of effective strategies among teachers, working groups and at whole-staff level.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Three subject evaluations have been carried out in the last four years; Materials Technology (Wood) and Construction Studies, Science and Irish. Progress in relation to the implementation of the recommendations has been good overall.

Leadership and Management

The recommendation relating to leadership and management has been progressed very effectively.

Teaching and Learning

Overall, there has been a good level of progress in the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations that pertained to teaching and learning. There is scope to further improve the whole-school implementation of written formative assessment and strategies to have greater student involvement in the assessment process.

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

The school has a very good SSE process and very good capacity for improvement, with data-informed actions related to learning and care that are innovative and impactful.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The SSE process is very good. The school community has engaged very successfully with SSE: baseline data has been gathered from staff, parents and students; subcommittees have been established; action plans developed; and strategies enacted.

It was not evident that all literacy and numeracy practices identified in the first cycle of SSE have become embedded into lessons. It is recommended that the SSE team monitor the initial targets and evaluate the impact of the teaching and learning practices identified in the first three-year plan.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has adapted very well to ongoing school improvement and change. There is very effective leadership at board of management and senior management level that empowers staff to take leadership roles within the school.

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;