

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Newpark Comprehensive School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newtown Park Avenue Blackrock Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	810011

Date of Evaluation: 20-11-2019



**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.

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	20-11-2019
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	<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

Newpark Comprehensive School is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. The school was established in 1972 and has a current enrolment of 861 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- School management provides effective leadership and management to the school; throughout the school community there is very good commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of students.
- The school provides a comprehensive curriculum and a significant and extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; however, hours allocated by the Department for students with additional educational needs (AEN) are not fully utilised and the daily registration time does not constitute tuition time.
- Post holders and year heads carry out their duties in a conscientious manner but responsibilities are not distributed equitably.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; in the majority of lessons the quality ranged from good to very good while in the remainder the quality ranged from satisfactory to fair.
- The parent and student voice is sought and valued, and the promotion of student participation and leadership is very good.
- Overall, the level of engagement with the recommendations from previous evaluations is good; the school has engaged in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and the overall capacity for improvement is very good, though a more consistent approach to strategic planning for agreed priorities should be adopted.

Recommendations

- The board of management, together with senior management, should ensure that the full teaching allocation for students with AEN is deployed for its intended purpose, and that all practice complies with Circular 0014/2017; in addition, all students should receive a minimum of twenty-eight hours tuition time.
- In the next whole-school review of the posts of responsibility (POR) structure the board should be informed by Circular 0003/2018 to ensure that duties, roles and responsibilities

attached to posts are commensurate at the appropriate level and that a more cohesive middle management leadership team is developed.

- The quality of learner experiences and outcomes should be further developed through a focus in all lessons on productive engagement of all learners, the use of differentiation and formative assessment strategies and the provision of regular homework tasks to extend students' learning and develop key skills.
- To further enhance the high standard of student care, consideration should be given to the development of a system of target-setting and tracking to monitor students' individual progress in subjects.
- The board should make arrangements for the preparation of a developmental action plan that is guided by a mission statement that is collaboratively devised by all stakeholders.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

The board of management along with the senior management team afford effective leadership and management to the school. Throughout the school community there is a very strong commitment and highly effective practices to promote inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of students.

Within the board there is a very good range of skills and expertise to lead the school community. The board maintains a keen interest in teaching, learning and assessment practices of the school. The relatively new senior management team is committed to encouraging ongoing improvement in teaching and learning through the provision of whole-school continuing professional development, regular attendance at subject department meetings and meetings with individual teachers and subject departments to discuss their work.

Student attainment in certificate examinations is good overall. It is suggested that a system be developed to track and monitor student academic progress using the students' measured cognitive ability available in the school as an initial benchmark.

The school's provision of a comprehensive and balanced curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students and to avail of teachers' expertise and areas of interest. There was very good engagement with parents, teachers and students in devising the curriculum for the new Junior Cycle. New areas of learning and short courses in areas such as drama, mindfulness, digital media literacy, philosophy, religious education and artistic performance adhere to the principles of Junior Cycle. Commendably, TY students can engage in new areas of learning such as anthropology, philosophy, politics, first aid, and the languages of Russian and Japanese. In Leaving Certificate students can avail of the new subjects Politics and Society and Physical Education and are provided with modules to support the development of their study and life skills, mental health and wellbeing. While the LCVP is well organised, an ab-initio language module should be provided for students that are not taking a modern language. Students in the LCA programme are provided with their own recreation room so as to create a sense of community.

To enhance students' experience of school and the advancement of active citizenship a significant and extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is offered to students. Teachers are commended for their provision of these activities and volunteering of their time.

The creation of a highly effective caring, supportive and respectful school community is underpinned by the school's support structure: the AEN department, the guidance and chaplaincy service, the year heads, form teachers and nurses. Student support teams and year heads meet regularly to discuss and be informed on student progress.

Among the very good practices of the AEN department is the key worker support system, the preparation of a strengths and needs profiles for each student, the assessing of students' advancement in defined areas three times a year and the provision of a range of interventions to support students.

There is good timetabled provision in senior cycle for guidance; a stronger input by the guidance service in junior cycle is recommended. The chaplain meets each first year student individually and this is good practice.

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and relationships and sexuality education programmes are well established on the curriculum for junior and senior cycle. It is laudable that the

SPHE department has developed resources for use in schools and has worked with Unicef on social issues relevant to young people.

Managing the organisation

The senior management team actively fosters a positive school climate by encouraging and modelling respectful interactions at all levels. Within the senior management team there is a good mix of skills and attributes to effectively manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The principal and two deputy principals meet daily and in a formal capacity twice a week to review and plan school activities. Currently the senior management team members are professionally defining their respective roles and responsibilities.

There are very good communication systems in the school. The board of management is well informed through regular, well-conducted and well-attended meetings and through the provision of a comprehensive principal's report on school activities. The weekly twenty minute staff briefing, the regular staff meetings and use of electronic systems help to keep staff informed on relevant school activities, events and issues. However, no minutes of staff meetings are maintained and this should be reviewed. The use of a variety of electronic systems including a school app aids effective communication with parents, students and the community.

A comprehensive range of policies has been developed in a consultative manner with appropriate stakeholders. Commendably, some policies such as that on single use plastic were initiated by students. The school adopts a pastoral approach to student misbehaviours, which includes the use of long-established restorative justice practices. Procedures for the daily monitoring of student attendance are in place. It is recommended that strategies that target the small cohort of students for whom attendance is an issue be devised and implemented.

Human resources are generally deployed well on the timetable, but some of the AEN allocation is being used for mainstream teaching. The board of management, together with senior management, should ensure that the full teaching allocation for students with AEN is deployed for its intended purpose, and that all practice complies with Circular Letter 0014/2017. While the school provides twenty-eight hours' contact time per week, forty minutes of this time is allocated to daily tutor time for roll call. In order for the daily tutor period to have an educational purpose for students, its current format should be revised.

The school's admissions, transition and induction practices are effectively co-ordinated and managed. Visits to feeder primary schools by guidance and AEN personnel are good practice and support the building of accurate profiles of students' personal, academic, social and emotional needs.

The building and grounds are maintained to a high standard. Staff supported by the board have engaged in strategic planning and development for the use of digital technologies by all members of the school community. There is a whole-school approach to the development of arts, music and drama in the school. Many of the school's facilities are used by the community. Environmental responsibility is actively promoted through the green-schools programme; students and teachers are jointly working on a biodiversity garden as part of the Green Flag award.

Leading school development

Throughout school documentation there are varied guiding visions and aspirations that support high expectations for students. However, there is an absence of a unified mission statement that captures fully the purpose and priorities of the school. It is recommended that a mission statement be established in collaboration with all stakeholders.

The board has established priorities that include the improvement of learning, teaching and assessment, the development and formalising of middle management and the maintenance and improvement of student-teacher relationship and student voice. It is very good practice that the board in consultation with the senior management team sets aside time twice a year to review progress in the school and set developmental priorities in at least three areas. There is scope to further progress strategic planning practices in the school. The board's priorities, in addition to others that the school community may identify, should form part of the developmental action plan informed by baseline data with identifiable targets, timeframe and named persons with responsibility to oversee progress.

The school is actively supported by a well organised and dynamic Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Through its work, the PTA strives to foster a positive sense of community. Opinions on educational matters and relevant policies are regularly sought from parents. Commendably the PTA links in with the SPHE department regarding guest speakers that address parents, thus enabling discussions to occur between students and teachers on the chosen topic. To enhance the sense of school community the PTA organises social events for all parents of each year group in junior cycle, organises a Christmas fair involving all stakeholders and the local community, and meets with the board.

Developing leadership capacity

While duties are carried out by middle management in a conscientious manner, there are some inconsistencies in the level of responsibilities within the post structure as some of the duties are significant while others are task-oriented, providing limited opportunity to build leadership capacity. The leadership aspect of the middle management structure should be further developed as an advisory and consultative body within the school. In the next review of posts of responsibility, the board, senior management and staff should adhere to the leadership framework as outlined in Circular 0003/2018 and ensure that duties, roles and responsibilities are commensurate with a post of responsibility at the appropriate level, and that the time allocated from the school's teaching resources to post holders to carry out their duties is warranted.

Year heads oversee the welfare of their year groups effectively and, along with class tutors, provide pastoral support for students. The detailing of the role and responsibilities attached to each year head's specific duties relating to specific year groups is very good practice and its inclusion in the teacher handbook supports accountability and communication in the school.

To address school priorities as they arise, teams of teachers are formed and are currently actively involved in areas including wellbeing, SSE and digital technologies use. There is scope to further develop this approach within the school.

The provision of placements for student teachers (PMEs) and the school's participation in the Droichead programme for newly-qualified teachers is positive and has enabled productive interactions among teachers to combine experience and innovation.

The promotion and facilitation of student voice and student leadership have been developed to a high degree in the school. Students are encouraged to get involved in other areas of learning and activities that seek to address their individual interests. Students have opportunities to develop their leadership capacity through their involvement in school areas such as the student council, the prefect system, leadership training in TY, the leadership for life programme in 5th year, green schools committee and leadership of clubs and societies. The establishment by the board of a subcommittee to promote student voice in the school exemplifies their commitment to students as partners in education.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; while the majority of lessons ranged from good to very good, in the remainder of lessons the quality ranged from satisfactory to fair and in some of these lessons there were elements that required significant improvement.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In the majority of lessons, teachers had high expectations for students' productivity. Where practice was most effective, teachers used appropriate resources to activate students' interests which supported high levels of student engagement. In almost all lessons, teachers used scaffolded and enabling tasks to stimulate productive discussions, deepen understanding and provide opportunities for students to recognise and experience success.

In half of the lessons observed, clear learning intentions were shared with students. In almost all remaining lessons, teachers outlined the activities which students would complete during the lesson. It is recommended that learning intentions be shared with students in all lessons and these should clearly outline what students should know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning activities and teacher inputs. Best practice was evident when teachers revisited and assessed students' attainment of the shared learning intentions. The use of such practices should be extended.

In some of the best lessons, criteria for success were aligned to learning intentions and shared with students, and these were used by students to assess their own learning. Consequently, the students displayed an awareness of their own learning and attainment, and used this awareness to self-select appropriately challenging activities which were differentiated based on the degree of difficulty posed. In other lessons, opportunities were provided for students to reflect on their learning and identify strengths and areas for further improvement. These highly effective practices should be extended to provide students with opportunities to negotiate their own learning thereby increasing their autonomy and effectiveness as learners.

Appropriate use of digital technology was evident during many lessons. Very good practice was evident when students used it to undertake independent research tasks and opportunities were provided for students to share their learning with their peers. Commendably, some teachers are using virtual learning environments as a mechanism to support out-of-class student learning.

In the majority of lessons, deliberate efforts were made to facilitate collaborative learning tasks that provided students with opportunities to develop key skills including 'working with others' and 'communicating'. Good-quality learning was observed when collaborative activities were well planned and were aligned to the learning intentions of the lesson. In some classrooms, the cluster arrangement of desks supported students to participate in collaborative activities.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

In most lessons, teachers established and maintained orderly classrooms. In a small number of lessons, classroom management strategies should have been implemented consistently by teachers to support students in adapting their behaviour for learning.

To support the range of abilities within class groups, teachers provided individual in-class support and differentiated questioning strategies, where appropriate. In the planning of a significant minority of lessons, teachers used their knowledge of the strengths and needs of individual learners to differentiate activities, worksheets and assessment tasks. This very good practice should be extended to ensure that all students are challenged and supported appropriately.

Homework was regularly assigned in just over half of all lessons observed and irregular recording of homework was observed in students' journals. Best practice was evident when homework was well

explained and differentiated and teachers provided time for students to record homework in their journal. As homework provides opportunities for students to consolidate and extend their learning and develop key skills, its role in student learning should be discussed and regularised in a whole-school and subject department context.

In the majority of lessons, teachers used very good assessment strategies as an integral part of teaching and learning. These included digital quizzes, anticipation exercises, lower and higher order questions and problem-solving worksheets. Questions were generally well directed towards named students, and this supported students' engagement and learning. However, in some lessons, an over-reliance on the use of global questioning was evident. Teachers should ensure that a balance between the use of global and directed questions is achieved to provide sufficient opportunities for all students to participate in lessons.

In general, students received good quality oral formative feedback from teachers about their progress. In a few lessons, there was evidence of teachers regularly providing written formative feedback on students' work. It is recommended that written formative feedback on significant homework tasks and assignments be provided by all teachers to ensure that students' strengths are acknowledged and areas for improvement are identified, and that students record formative feedback that is given orally.

There was evidence of good collaborative practice in most subject departments and this is supporting teachers in the implementation of the curriculum and planning for valuable extra-curricular experiences for students. Many subject departments are utilising a digital platform to share planning documents and resources and this is good practice.

Most subject departments are making good use of the planning templates provided by Junior Cycle for Teachers. Best practice was evident when learning outcomes were aligned to teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Very good practice was evident when subject plans included hyperlinks to resources and teachers had access to resources which could be modified to suit the needs of learners.

Curricular plans are developed for all TY modules and subjects. Generally, the curriculum plans for TY reflected the ethos and philosophy of the TY programme. The quality of subject planning in TY ranged from very good to requiring development. To promote consistency in planning it is recommended that a common planning template for TY be used across all subjects and modules and that modes of assessment be reviewed to ensure they are appropriately varied and challenging.

Subject departments could devise action plans to outline how continuous improvements in teaching, learning and assessment are being planned for and monitored. Strategies to promote the realisation of SSE targets in subject areas should be a key feature of action planning.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

In general, management shares recommendations arising from all inspections with all teachers for the purpose of integrating best practice throughout the whole school. Overall, very good progress has been made with recommendations arising from previous inspections. A review of the schedule of posts of responsibility has taken place and adjustments have been made to teachers' timetables. Some work remains in optimising posts and teaching resources.

Teaching and Learning

Very good progress is evident in the implementation of some of the recommendations from previous inspections relating to teaching and learning such as in the areas of subject planning. There is still scope to consistently provide developmental written feedback on students' work, to share learning intentions and success criteria in lessons, and to use differentiation strategies in lessons.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school has engaged well in the SSE process. Areas of focus include numeracy, review of TY programme, student review of formative feedback, student development of success criteria on tasks. There have been mixed outcomes for students in relation to the targets set in each of the plans. It is advised that SSE targets and actions be more visible in classroom practice and, when deciding on areas to pursue in the SSE process, a stronger focus be placed on students' aspirations for improvement. A reconfiguration of questions in the evaluation stage of the process should yield rich and valuable information for the school community.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

Overall the whole-school capacity for improvement is very good, although a more consistent approach to strategic planning for agreed priorities should be adopted. There is a high quality of expertise and experience available within the school community. Among the significant strengths of leadership capacity is a dedicated board that fosters a culture of development for improvement, a new senior management team, a capable and loyal staff, and a robust partnership approach with parents and students.

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 Management of Newpark Comprehensive School welcomes this 2020 WSE MLL report and appreciates the professionalism of the process undertaken in November 2019.

The Board welcomes the recognition in the report regarding:

- The school's commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of its students.
- The school's provision of a comprehensive and balanced curriculum, and in particular, the variety and innovation evidenced in the consultative development of curriculum for both Junior Cycle and Transition Year.
- The quality of learning and teaching in the school and the quality of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- The highly effective caring, supportive and respectful school community underpinned by the senior management team, the form teacher and year head teams, the student support team and the AEN team.
- The school's excellent promotion and facilitation of student voice and student leadership and its open and consultative relationship with parents and guardians.

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 appreciates the positive feedback in the report in relation to the school's level of engagement with the recommendations from previous evaluations. Regarding the summary recommendations in this report:

- A timeframe for school stakeholders to collaborate on a review of the school's mission statement and a developmental action plan will be initiated.
- A pilot program for a system of tracking student progress has been completed by the Guidance Department. This pilot program will inform the work of an AP2 post which has now been redesignated to 'Student Tracking and Progress'.
- Mechanisms to share good practice in learning and teaching, both within and between subject departments, have been ongoing for some years; these plans will be further strengthened and a focus on differentiation and an exploration of Universal Design for Learning will be included in planning for 2020/2021, in line with WSE MLL recommendations.
- Much work has already been completed to bring the POR structure in the school in line with Circular 0003/2018. For example, a review of the leadership and management needs and priorities of the school took place in Easter 2018 and another review will take place in Easter 2020, in line with recommended practice. Further, under review, many posts have been redesignated, to include wellbeing, digital teaching and learning, AEN coordination, student voice and student leadership and student tracking and progress. The strategic unfolding of this work will continue apace, in line with WSE MLL recommendations.
- The Board notes that the report affirms the very good practices within the school's AEN department. The Board contends that the current school allocation for students with AEN is deployed to maximise *inclusion* of students presenting with AEN. Allocation practices are regularly reviewed and explored by the Board. The WSE/MLL recommendations regarding AEN allocation will be examined at a future Board planning meeting.