

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Mount Temple Comprehensive School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Malahide Road Dublin 3
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	81002K

Date of Evaluation: 07-04-2017



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

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

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

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

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

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management 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.

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	07-04-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with board of management• Meetings with principal and deputy principal• 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

Mount Temple Comprehensive School was established in 1972 following the amalgamation of Bertrand and Rutland School with Mountjoy School and Hibernian Marine School. The school operates under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Glendalough. Its current enrolment is 896 students: 454 boys and 442 girls. The programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- School management and leadership are very effective in many areas; the school's ethos is truly comprehensive, inclusive, tolerant and enabling.
- The broad, balanced and innovative curriculum responds to students' needs, although the deployment of some resources needs review.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons visited ranged from very good to good; there is scope to share the very effective practices observed with all staff.
- During the evaluation, students were observed to be very well behaved, articulate, self-confident and critical thinkers who were overwhelmingly positive about their school and their learning experiences.
- Good progress has been made in the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.
- The school self-evaluation (SSE) process is very effective and the school community demonstrates a very good capacity for ongoing improvement.
- Revised junior-cycle subject specifications in English and Science are being taught; not all teachers are engaging in the classroom-based assessments and subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings due to industrial action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educational support plans should be developed for all students with special educational needs (SEN) and these should be included in the student support files in line with Department Circular 0014/2017.
- The school timetable should be reconfigured in line with Department Circular M29/95 to ensure that first-year students receive a minimum of 28 hours' tuition time per week.
- A core team should be established to promote the greater sharing of very effective practices in teaching, learning, assessment and subject planning across all departments.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1. School ownership and management

The quality of governance in the school is very good. The board demonstrates a deep understanding and appreciation of the needs of the students and the work of the school. As a school committed to comprehensive education and informed by Protestant traditions, it seeks to promote its motto “*All different, all equal*” in every aspect of its work. The board fosters a strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, equality and the holistic development of all students.

The members of the board are very experienced and some have received formal board training from various bodies including the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS). The board is nearing the end of its five-year term and a new board will be appointed in October 2017. It is recommended that all board members receive training together as a corporate body when they take up office.

The board meets regularly and keeps a good record of its work. It is commendable that all policies are reviewed on a systematic basis in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders. An examination of the minutes of board meetings indicates that the board takes a keen interest in developments in teaching and learning, and supports staff who wish to engage in continuing professional development (CPD). The board’s second priority is securing approval for a new energy-neutral school building on the campus.

The school provides monthly financial returns as well as an annual financial statement to the Department of Education and Skills. The board has been operating without a finance sub-committee in recent years. It is recommended that a finance sub-committee be re-established in line with best practice and in accordance with the *Governance Manual for Community and Comprehensive Schools (2016)*.

The work of the senior management team is of an exceptionally high standard. Both the principal and deputy principal share a very clear vision for the school and adopt an effective and innovative approach to working towards school improvement. They bring complementary skills to the operation of the school. They provided evidence that they adopt a decisive approach to dealing with complex issues. Their leadership style is to affirm staff and to encourage initiative and innovation. The value and trust they place in staff contributes greatly to the very high level of morale and job satisfaction communicated by teachers to the inspection team during the evaluation. Responses to teacher, parent and student questionnaires indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the manner in which the school is being run and managed.

The post holders provide good support to the operation of the school at middle-management level and some of the posts involve significant and onerous duties. It is evident that the duties assigned to a small number of posts no longer match school needs. Consideration should be given to reviewing these particular posts in order to best meet the priority needs of the school.

The year heads, deputy year heads and form teachers also play a key role in supporting students. This support system operates largely independently of the post structure and affords teachers a valuable opportunity for professional development. Staff demonstrate a high level of energy, enthusiasm and dynamism in their work. It was evident throughout the evaluation that all members of staff share a strong commitment to caring for students, to providing extra supports to them and to encouraging them to develop their talents and achieve their potential in all aspects of school life.

The parents' association plays a significant role in the school. The association is affiliated to the Parents' Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (PACCS) and to the National Association of Compass – Cooperation of Minority Religion and Protestant Parent Associations (Post Primary). The parents have established their own sub-committee for school-policy development and provide volunteers to supervise the school library and sick bay. They demonstrate a keen interest in the new Junior Cycle framework and developments in education.

1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Leadership for learning in the school is very effective. The whole-school community has developed a *Learning Policy* that is central to all policies, curriculum development and its school plan. The learning policy links the school's ethos, mission, vision and direction to what is taught in the school. Inspired by the ideal of a comprehensive education, it promotes educational experimentation, encouraging innovation in teaching and learning, fostering critical faculties and enabling creativity.

The senior management team fosters a culture in which learning flourishes. They are committed to supporting improvements in students' learning experiences and outcomes. Student achievement in assessments, including the certificate examinations, has been analysed by school management and some very positive learner outcomes have been noted.

The principal and deputy principal promote a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners. They support new initiatives, such as action projects in Science and Geography, as part of post-graduate research by staff.

New subject specifications for English and Science are being implemented and all assessment tasks in English have been submitted as part of the new Junior Cycle framework. Classroom-based assessments and SLAR meetings are organised. In cases where some staff members are not participating in these assessment meetings, the school reports that this is due to industrial action.

Some subject departments, such as Business, Home Economics and Metalwork, have developed their own innovative curricular programmes and collaborative assessments based on the key skills and statements of learning for Junior Cycle. The challenge for the school is to ensure that all such initiatives are part of an overall comprehensive strategy to implement the new Junior Cycle framework and its aim to facilitate deeper learning in a smaller number of subjects.

The school's broad and balanced curriculum responds to students' needs, although the deployment of some resources in the area of timetabling and learning support needs review.

Many aspects of the support for students with SEN are very good. Students with SEN are very well integrated into mainstream classes and are well supported by teachers and special needs assistants. All of the necessary information to inform the support work is gathered and shared through discussions with the relevant teachers. However, it is not current practice in the school to produce educational support plans for students in receipt of additional support. It is recommended that a written educational support plan, based on all the available data, be prepared for each student with SEN and included in the student support files in line with best practice, as outlined in Department Circular 0014/2017. The plans should be reviewed regularly to evaluate the learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the interventions, and adapted as necessary to meet students' changing needs.

Very good systems are in place to ensure the smooth transition of students from primary to second level. Commendably, the induction programme includes a summer camp, a breakfast club and a

buddy system. It is commendable that students in first year and TY are facilitated to sample subject options in advance of a final decision.

Currently, the school is not meeting its requirement to provide a minimum of twenty-eight hours' tuition time for students in first year. First-year students are not timetabled for lessons during the last period on Monday and Thursday. Instead, they are free to engage in sport, study or go home. It is recommended that the school timetable be reconfigured for the next academic year 2017/18 to bring it into line with the requirements of Department Circular M29/95.

Students following the TY programme, LCA and LCVP find placements with local businesses for work experience. Work experience is undertaken by LCA students every Friday. TY students are facilitated to engage in community work every Tuesday afternoon. It is important that such placements are very closely monitored, especially those in TY, to ensure that all students fully avail of such valuable learning opportunities.

Very good systems are in place to support student wellbeing and include the services of a student support team, two guidance counsellors and an external counsellor. It is commendable that the school is engaging actively in a pilot project on positive mental health with a local hospital. Themed events are held regularly to promote wellbeing and a number of support groups have been established including a group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender students. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education are well provided for within the curriculum. While the sports facilities are a particular strength of the school, timetabled provision for Physical Education (PE) is not optimal, as it provides for two single periods at junior cycle and is an optional subject at senior cycle. It is recommended that the school review this level of provision by timetabling double periods of PE where practicable and facilitating greater engagement with the subject at senior cycle. These arrangements would further support the national focus on promoting wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.

During the evaluation, student behaviour was observed to be exemplary, a point echoed in responses to teacher, parent and student questionnaires. There is a very effective student management system in place which includes a well-communicated ladder of referral. There is a strong culture of using positive reinforcement and rewards to promote good behaviour. The school reviews the implementation of its code regularly, noting areas for improvement; this year's focus is on attendance and punctuality.

A laudable feature of student life in Mount Temple is the emphasis on promoting the student voice. During the evaluation, many students were observed to be articulate, self-confident, respectful, independent and critical thinkers. In their interactions with the inspection team and in their responses to questionnaires, students were overwhelmingly positive about the school and their learning experiences. Student leadership is fostered through the student council, the prefect and buddy-mentoring systems and a host of other extra-curricular activities. Commendably, the student council meets with the board of management and the parents' association to discuss its plans. It is positive that students are surveyed regularly in relation to policies and aspects of the SSE process. There is scope to extend this practice to encompass more comprehensive and detailed feedback on key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.

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

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

1.3. Management of facilities

The management of facilities is very good. The current school comprises nine separate buildings spread across the campus, many of which are old but are well maintained. Some of the classrooms do not have good access to the internet. Discussions with staff indicated that there is a need to upgrade the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and Wi-Fi access in order to further support e-learning. It is recommended that school management, in collaboration with staff, develop a plan for the systematic upgrading of the ICT infrastructure to enhance facilities for teaching, learning and assessment. This plan could be progressed as resources permit, in line with the grant-aid scheme outlined in Department Circular 01/2017.

The school community is very committed to green, ecologically-friendly practices, and this is also reflected in the architectural plans for the new sustainable rebuild. Fire drills are held regularly and the health and safety policy has recently been updated.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of teaching and learning was very good in just over half of the lessons observed and good in the remainder. There were some examples of excellent practice noted within lessons. Teachers' interest in their subjects and enthusiasm for teaching were very strong features of lessons. There was a notable sense of partnership and teamwork in the relationships between students and their teachers and this contributed significantly to the quality of student engagement and learning.

Teachers' individual lesson planning and preparation were of a very high standard. In almost all cases, a range of relevant and useful resources was provided to encourage students to personally engage with the learning.

Very high-quality learning was observed where a variety of active learning methodologies was used effectively. These included group work, pair work and practical activities such as student presentations and musical performances. Students demonstrated very high levels of confidence when they were provided with opportunities to discuss their learning and to express themselves. Highly effective learning was noted where teachers related examples to students' own life experiences. However, there was an imbalance between student activity and teacher input in a significant minority of lessons with students mainly listening, reading aloud from the text book or taking notes off the board. Therefore, the practice of using effective, active-learning methodologies should be extended to more lessons.

The quality of assessment was good in most lessons. Best practice was evident when the students were clear about what they were expected to learn, when progress was monitored at key stages and learning was checked at the end. Various assessment strategies, such as exit tickets, mini-whiteboards, online questioning platforms and feedback sheets, were used to effectively assess learning. An example of excellent peer assessment was noted where students evaluated each other's work during mock practical exams; this included the highly effective use of success criteria, a quality continuum and quality feedback by students. Consideration should be given to extending the use of peer assessment to more subjects.

Learning was well differentiated in most lessons to cater for all ability levels. Differentiation was particularly successful when students were enabled to work at their own pace. This allowed the

teacher to provide support or more challenge as required. In lessons where whole-class teaching was the main methodology, it was evident that not all students were sufficiently involved or challenged. Classroom activities should be further used which facilitate differentiation of learning and provide sufficient challenge for better able students.

Subject planning processes are good with departments meeting regularly, both formally and informally, to plan for their subjects. There is considerable variation in the quality of the written subject plans ranging from satisfactory to very good. A small number of plans were exemplary. Best practice was observed where the plans included a reflection and action plan on students' attainment in the certificate examinations; detailed schemes of work outlining the intended learning outcomes, together with the methodology, resources, materials and modes of assessment to be used, and the minutes of subject department meetings.

It is evident that individual teachers and specific subject departments are developing very effective approaches to planning, teaching, learning and assessment in their own specialist areas. It is opportune to establish a mechanism to share the valuable learning from this work at whole-school level. It is recommended that the school establish a core team to promote the greater sharing of these innovative and effective practices across all departments.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations is good.

3.1 Management

Good progress has been made in relation to the implementation of management-related recommendations. Recommendations in recent subject inspection reports regarding minor maintenance issues, the health and safety policy and the safe storage of materials have all been implemented. Most of the recommendations contained in the last WSE report have been addressed except for the requirement to provide twenty-eight hours' tuition time per week, which is a re-stated recommendation in this report.

3.2 Learning and teaching

Some very good progress has been noted in the implementation of recommendations relating to teaching and learning. While assessment-for-learning strategies, active-learning methodologies and appropriate assessment procedures have all been implemented by subject departments, they are not yet embedded consistently in lessons, as was evidenced during the evaluation. To date, recommendations for significant development in the area of subject planning have been implemented in a small number of subjects only.

4. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION (SSE) PROCESS AND CAPACITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The well-established SSE process is very effective and the school community demonstrates a very good capacity for ongoing improvement. A wide-ranging school improvement plan is developed and published every year and includes strategies on improving aspects of teaching and learning and other areas of school life. Strategies to improve literacy and numeracy have been implemented already. Literacy strategies include a timetabled period in the library for every first-year student. Other strategies such as the effective use of key words and subject-specific terminology were

evident in the lessons observed. The focus in the next academic year 2017/18 will be on improving learner outcomes for “the students in the middle”. The SSE process is also being used effectively to assist the school in introducing relevant aspects of the Junior Cycle framework.

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 Mount Temple warmly welcomes this 2017 Inspection report and appreciates the process undertaken in Spring 2017.

The Board very much appreciates the recognition in the report regarding:

- The school's continuing efforts to embody a comprehensive, inclusive, tolerant, and enabling ethos in all dimensions of school life;
- The importance of curriculum innovation, in line with the Department's guidelines and the core principles of junior cycle reform;
- The quality of learning and teaching;
- Student well-being and engagement;
- Parental involvement and satisfaction;
- The effectiveness of ongoing school self-evaluation and school improvement processes and culture;
- The effectiveness of management and leadership.

The Board would also like to acknowledge the positive effect of the process of WSE-MLL as both affirmative and critical to further improvement. Given the fact that Mount Temple's long-awaited rebuild is now progressing swiftly, we look forward to building a "School of the Future" in which the educational architecture mirrors these positive findings, and enables further progress.

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

Regarding the summary recommendations, all have been progressed already, following informal feedback and the earlier draft report. In sum:

- Limitations regarding wireless connectivity have been remedied during Summer 2017;
- Mechanisms to share good practice in learning and teaching, both within and between subject departments, have been ongoing for some years; these plans have been further strengthened and are included in planning for 2017/8, in line with WSE recommendations.
- The process for developing more detailed IEPs (i.e. educational support plans) for students with Special Educational Needs, including targets, has been rolled out. Beginning in May 2017, immediately following the WSE, this system is now in place and will be further improved in 2017/8.
- Recommendations made in the report, in regard to specific timetabling and curriculum items, have also been fully implemented in time for the school year 2017/8.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

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

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;