

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	The Donahies Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Streamville Road Dublin 13
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91318U

Date of Evaluation: 26-04-2018



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

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

How to read this report

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

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

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

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

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	26 April 2018
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

Donahies Community School has a current enrolment of 515 students: 254 girls and 261 boys. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. All curricular programmes, including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, are offered.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Leadership and management are very good overall; there is exemplary practice in most areas with a strong focus on ensuring that all students reach their potential, and scope for development in the subject planning processes and in optimising the use of available data.
- Expertise in teaching and learning is shared through collaborative lesson planning, peer observation and review, and through teachers' presentations at staff meetings; however, some aspects of these practices are organised on an informal basis currently.
- The school is exceptionally inclusive providing an excellent quality of student care and supporting students with special educational needs (SEN), including those with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), very well.
- There is excellent practice in respect of developing leadership capacity within the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall, with some excellent practice observed; there was scope for improvement in some assessment practices, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and the variety of learner experiences.
- There has been good implementation of recommendations made in previous evaluations and the school has very good capacity for improvement, but aspects of the DEIS planning process need to be refined.

Recommendations

- Formal structures should be established to support collaborative lesson planning, peer observation and review, and optimising the value of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD).
- Subject department planning processes should be further developed to document and extend the use of a greater variety of methodologies, good assessment practices and the use of ICT in lessons.
- DEIS targets should be specific, linked explicitly to and evaluated against baseline data, and focused on achieving improvement in student outcomes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. There is exemplary practice in most areas of school life and scope for improvement in subject planning and optimising the use of available data.

Leading learning and teaching

Leadership for learning is of a very high standard. The principal and deputy principal share a common vision which places students at the core of all decisions made in the school. They play an essential role in ensuring that the school is a calm and respectful place to work and learn. They strongly support inclusion and focus on ensuring that students reach their potential. The SSE priorities have been chosen strategically to target genuine areas for improvement in teaching and learning.

There is an emerging culture of creativity in teaching and learning. Teachers share expertise through extensive consultation and making presentations at staff meetings. Access to CPD is widely facilitated for teachers. The school should devise a strategy to monitor the impact of CPD on classroom practice.

There is a student-centred approach to subject choice. A very wide range of subjects and programmes is offered. The availability of an extensive range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities provides valuable learning for students and opportunities for them to experience success.

The school is exceptionally inclusive. There is an ASD unit catering for twelve students currently. Students with ASD are included appropriately in school activities and are valued for the unique contribution they make to school life.

Students with special educational needs (SEN) are very well supported. A wide range of interventions is in place to meet students' identified needs. There is highly effective communication between the SEN team and mainstream teachers.

The quality of care provided for students is excellent. The care team assesses and implements relevant strategies to meet the care needs of students. The relationships between students and their teachers were observed to be warm and affirming. A comprehensive transfer programme supports first-year students to settle into post-primary school life. The school maintains very good links with feeder primary schools.

DEIS supports for students are very good in the school. The School Completion Programme provides an attendance officer, lunch, and a breakfast club. Evening study is also provided and there is a homework club with teacher assistance available. Attendance at the breakfast and homework clubs is very high.

The work of the home-school-community-liaison co-ordinator provides essential support to students who are at risk of non-attendance and leaving school early. Teachers are very generous in providing additional supports to students preparing for examinations. The school provides courses in a range of areas of interest to parents.

In general, the TY, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational (LCVP) programmes are run very well. Work experience is monitored effectively. There is scope to improve provision in LCVP by teaching additional elements of the syllabus.

During the evaluation, students were well monitored and their behaviour was exemplary. The year head and class tutor system plays a key role in ensuring that the care and learning needs of the students are met. Behaviour management is strongly pastoral and the highly respectful relationships between staff and students contribute significantly to the positive school environment. A restorative approach is taken when dealing with issues that arise. Training in the use of restorative practices has been accessed by the principal and it is recommended that these practices be extended to all staff and used as a formal means of implementing the code of behaviour.

Wellbeing is this year's focus of SSE. Many aspects of the school's practices, within and outside of the classroom, are very effective in promoting students' wellbeing. The chaplain plays a highly effective role in the creating a caring atmosphere in the school and takes a holistic approach which connects mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing. Increased participation by all students in Physical Education (PE) is one of the SSE targets and the school is making good progress in this regard.

Provision for guidance is very good. The guidance counsellor provides advice through timetabled lessons and individual appointments for students from first to sixth year. The guidance counsellor also makes a significant contribution to students at key transition points in their school life. Personal counselling is provided by qualified personnel in line with best practice.

The school's book rental scheme supports families through helping to ensure that the cost of books is kept to a minimum. Additionally, the parents' association organises the purchase of the school uniform to reduce the financial burden on families.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is provided in junior cycle and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided for senior cycle students in line with curricular requirements.

The school maintains valuable links with outside agencies to optimise opportunities for students during their time in school and afterwards. The school is very fortunate to have the services of a part-time librarian to manage the school library.

The school supports new teachers very well through its engagement with the *Driochead* initiative. Trained mentors are in place in the school. It is suggested that further advantage be taken of the capacity-building opportunities, in terms of peer observation, that this high level of expertise offers.

Managing the organisation

The school is very well managed. The members of the board of management bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their work and are highly committed to the school. Communication between the board and its nominating bodies is very good, with an agreed report issued at the end of each board meeting. A review of the board minutes indicates ongoing and effective discussion of the important areas in running the school.

The school plan comprises a comprehensive document which outlines the organisational structure of the school, roles and responsibilities of all school personnel and all of the policies that govern school life.

The principal and deputy principal demonstrate the skills of an excellent senior management team. Their relationship with staff and students is characterised by honest and inclusive communication, transparency, integrity, warmth and compassion. When faced with challenges, they are solution orientated, take a measured and well-considered approach, and work in harmony with each other. Above all, they have helped to create a responsive learning environment where all members of the school community are equally valued.

The management of facilities and provision of resources is very good. Through the careful positioning of benches in communal areas, outdoor spaces are conducive to students' wellbeing.

Student art is displayed and celebrated around the school. There is scope to use displays to share and celebrate success. The school is committed to the environment and there is a vibrant green school culture. The school has been awarded two green flags and is working towards a third in the area of water conservation.

Leading school development

The board works in a highly effective manner. It supports the school through its work in policy making and review. There is a very high level of expertise amongst its members and they have received suitable training. The members of the board are very well informed and are very thorough in their oversight role with regard to managing finances, child protection and school improvement. They monitor student achievement in a meaningful way. They celebrate success and are present at school events.

There is very effective communication and co-operation with parents. The input of the parents' association is highly valued by school management. Parents on the association make a considerable contribution to policy review and SSE. The school seeks the views of the wider parent body through conducting surveys at parent-teacher meetings when it is most likely to reach a large proportion of the parent community.

Developing leadership capacity

There is excellent practice in respect of developing leadership capacity within the school. The holders of posts of responsibility support the school very well. There is also an exceptionally high level of volunteerism amongst teachers in supporting the effective running of the school. The senior management team is mindful of the strengths and talents of all staff members and provides a wide variety of opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills. A review of posts, informed by an audit of the current and emerging needs and resources, has been initiated and is progressing well.

Leadership is distributed very effectively through consultation committees in a wide range of development areas. Senior management actively promotes a culture of creativity and participation, welcoming and acting on ideas from all stakeholders.

Students are given leadership opportunities through the student council and their roles as prefects and mentors for first years. Student representatives address the board of management on items of importance to them and their views are acted upon. However, the questionnaire responses indicate scope to improve the student voice. It is recommended that student focus groups be consulted to strengthen student involvement, particularly around teaching and learning.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall, with some excellent practice noted. There were aspects for improvement in some lessons. In moving practice forward, the establishment of formal structures to support emerging innovation, such as collaborative lesson planning and observation and review of teaching and learning, would be beneficial.

Learner outcomes and experiences

In the majority of lessons, students were engaged actively in their learning. In some lessons, there was scope to enhance the quality of learner outcomes and experiences through planning for differentiation and though more effective use of the planned student-led activities.

Teachers had high expectations for learners in most lessons. Students were offered many opportunities to work collaboratively. This approach worked best when group-work roles were

assigned and the tasks were well planned. Students were confident in making contributions and demonstrated good group-work skills.

In all lessons, the learning intentions were shared with the students. This practice provided good structure and was most effective when teachers also revisited the learning intentions to assess students' knowledge and understanding. All lessons should include a strategy to ensure that learning is fully assessed by the end of the lesson and that future lessons are informed by this assessment.

In a few lessons, teachers shared the success criteria for tasks with students. This approach proved highly effective in supporting students to collaborate with their peers and facilitated personal reflection at an appropriate level. It also allowed learning to progress in a developmental manner as students gained a greater awareness of their strengths and areas of improvement.

Learning was well differentiated when the methodology chosen allowed students to work at their own pace and when a range of tasks challenged all students appropriately. Teachers circulated during lessons to monitor progress and provide assistance to any student experiencing difficulty. In some instances, learning was not as well differentiated; this occurred when the methodology used was over-reliant on whole-class teaching and when content or delivery was not adapted sufficiently to match learners' needs. Methodologies that actively engage and challenge all students should be used further.

In most lessons, the pre-teaching and highlighting of key words supported students' understanding of the material being taught. However, in some lessons there was an evident need for further strategies to enable students to meet the literacy demands of their subjects. It is recommended that the DEIS literacy interventions be reviewed. Additional measures, such as the use of activities to facilitate repetition of subject-specific terms and note making rather than note taking strategies, should be extended.

One lesson was observed in the class for students with ASD. This lesson was part of a level 2 learning programme on numeracy and was planned meticulously. The students were fully active and engaged in predicting, estimating and measuring. They were also encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning. Teachers used a very effective staged approach to exploring the concepts that facilitated gradual development of key skills. It is recommended that teachers of the ASD class engage in subject department planning process in order to share good teaching and learning practice across the school.

The quality of questioning observed in lessons was good. Teachers used oral questioning effectively as a form of assessing learning. Highly effective practice was evident when students were encouraged to develop their answers and provide examples to reinforce their understanding.

Student efforts were affirmed regularly and praised by teachers. Students' behaviour towards each other and their teachers was very respectful and this contributed to a positive learning environment.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

There was a good balance between student and teacher input in most lessons. Prepared resources developed the stated learning intentions effectively and catered for individual students' learning needs. The general pace of the majority of lessons was very good. A few lessons lacked the planning and preparation required to engage all learners.

Health and safety measures were highly effective in the practical lesson. Teachers modelled effective health and safety practice and this was followed by the students.

In some lessons observed, ICT, in the form of well-designed presentations enhanced by audio and media clips, was used to engage students and support learning. In a few lessons, students used

hand-held devices effectively for research tasks and for games to assess and consolidate learning. There was scope for greater use of ICT and for the students themselves to use it further as a learning tool. It is recognised that teachers provide training in the use of ICT for each other.

Homework was assigned in some of the lessons observed. However, students' journals were not being used in a consistent manner to record homework. The practice around giving and correcting homework should be reviewed and a more consistent system should be put in place.

In the students' copies and notebooks reviewed, some examples of useful formative feedback were noted. This very effective practice by some teachers was not fully established across the school, however, and should be extended.

A review of a selection of programmes of work indicated that there is a variation in the quality of planning across subject departments. Highly effective practice was evident where schemes of work aligned learning outcomes, methodologies, modes of assessment, and DEIS targets to each topic. This good practice should be replicated in all curricular planning.

Teachers' collective practice is very good overall. Subject departments are well established and discussion around teaching and learning takes place routinely. Additionally, some teachers are engaging in peer lesson observation and review. However, much of this work is done on an informal basis. It is recommended that a formal structure be put in place to support this valuable planning.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

There is good implementation of recommendations made in previous inspections.

Leadership and Management

There was one recommendation made in previous evaluations in the area of leadership and management relating to ensuring that LCA students were provided with 28-hours teaching time per week. This recommendation has been implemented.

Teaching and Learning

The lessons observed showed good implementation of previous recommendations in respect of teaching and learning. The most commonly made recommendations were to include lesson activities that facilitate students' active engagement and further use of ICT. While most lessons had a good variety of methodologies and ICT was used to good effect, there remains scope for fuller implementation of these recommendations.

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

The quality of the school's self-evaluation process and capacity for improvement is very good.

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The DEIS planning process is well established, inclusive and collaborative. Its scope has been extended to assessment and wellbeing under the school's SSE process. A range of valuable initiatives is in place to improve students' experiences and outcomes in all areas covered by DEIS. The six-step SSE process is implemented very effectively and the school improvement plan (SIP) is communicated to all members of the school community.

Some of the targets outlined in the DEIS plan need to be refined. The targets outlined in some cases are specific and measurable but others do not sufficiently relate to gathered baseline data. The overall evaluation of the success of the DEIS plan is focused on the measuring of success of the various strategies for improvement rather than student outcomes. It is recommended that baseline data for all areas of DEIS be included in the DEIS plan and that improvement in students' outcomes be measured against this established baseline.

The action plan for attainment is based on an analysis against national norms and intake data; this should be reflected in all subject department action plans and should inform teaching and learning more clearly. An investigation of the higher-level uptake of some subjects would be useful to ascertain how this could be replicated across all subjects. A more individualised and staged approach to target setting and analysis should be implemented to facilitate more realistic target setting. Additionally, subject action plans should be linked to all relevant DEIS and SSE themes.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has very good capacity for improvement. Senior management has a clear vision that is centred on ensuring the highest quality provision for students. Areas for improvement are identified by the senior management team and addressed in a forthright and respectful manner. There is a very high level of consultation between all members of the school community. All staff work cohesively and endeavour to ensure that students are afforded every opportunity to reach their potential. There is a strong commitment to the development of teaching and learning. Through recognising teacher expertise, talents and interests, staff members have opportunities to develop skills which contribute positively to students' experience.

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;