

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Leixlip Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Celbridge Road Leixlip Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91371B

Date of Evaluation: 06-12-2018



**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 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	06-12-2018
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

Leixlip Community School is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 618, and operates under the joint trusteeship of Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB), the Presentation Sisters and the Archbishop of Dublin. The school offers the Junior Cycle Framework, Transition Year (TY), established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school also has a class for students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of leadership and management is good, with scope to develop certain aspects, such as curricular planning.
- A very good range of pastoral supports is in place for the care and wellbeing of students.
- The deployment of a significant number of the hours allocated to the school for students with special educational needs (SEN) is used to provide low uptake subjects, student support files have not been developed, and SEN provision is not in line with the requirements of Circular Letter (CL) 0014/17.
- The day-to-day running of the school is very good and is supported by a committed team of assistant principals, however post-holders have not been provided with clear job descriptions.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the lessons observed, with scope to develop formative assessment and planning for improvement; while student attainment is good in some subjects, in others it is not in line with student's potential.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) has recently gained momentum, and very good progress has been made.

Recommendations

- The senior management team should undertake a curriculum review to address the sustainability of subjects with low uptake, and to ensure appropriate planning for the LCA programme, and for the TY programme as outlined in CL M1/00.
- The resources allocated to the school for students with SEN should be used fully for the intended purpose and the current model of provision for students with SEN should be reviewed, to include student support files, in line with CL 0014/17.

- The board should provide all post-holders with clear job descriptions in line with CL 0003/2018 to ensure that all posts are utilised to maximum effect, and senior management should formalise the system of tracking and monitoring student attainment attached to certain posts to ensure that students' potential is realised.
- Management and staff should develop a whole-school approach to homework, and formative assessment, including written formative feedback to improve student learning.
- All teachers should develop a consistent approach to subject and programme planning that includes evidence-based planning for improvement; target setting and specific actions for improvement in teaching and learning should be documented to ensure the requisite improvement in student outcomes.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good, with scope to develop certain aspects.

Leading learning and teaching

The senior management team comprises of the principal and two deputy principals. They are a cohesive team with individual and complementary skills and maintain a visible presence in the school. They have introduced an annual review of their work and set themes for improvement. The current focus on improved communication has commendably been addressed through the development of a school newsletter and the school's on-line platform. The newsletter is also shared with the wider community and builds on the very good links that have been developed between the school and locality.

Members of the senior management team have overseen positive developments in leading learning, such as the building of staff teams. The enhancement of structures to support these developments is now needed to maximise their effectiveness.

The principal keeps the board well-informed of relevant educational developments and provides broad data on attainment in certificate examinations. This data indicates scope for improvement in student outcomes, both in terms of uptake of subjects at higher level and in attainment. A more robust interrogation of the data by the board would support school development and improved outcomes for students.

The board recently ratified a review of the schedule of posts which resulted in some assistant year heads having roles in student tracking and monitoring. While roles are outlined in the schedule of posts, post holders have not received formal job descriptions. Given the amount of posts allocated to the school, which is a significant resource, these need to be utilised to maximum effect. The board should provide all post holders with a clear job description in line with CL 0003/2018. In the case of the role of assistant year head, this clarity is needed to ensure the system of tracking and monitoring of students is formalised and that students' potential is realised. In this context, senior and middle management should oversee the systematic use of available data by subject, programme and SEN teams, to implement meaningful evidence-based planning for improvement.

The current schedule of posts of responsibility is in its infancy, and should be kept under review to ensure that it meets the priority needs of the school, and that there is no overlap. At present post holders do not provide the principal with an annual report on their work. This should be addressed in line with CL 0003/2018.

The senior management team manages the planning and implementation of a broad academic curriculum well. Teachers are generally deployed appropriately, and deliberate efforts are made to meet the needs of students. Falling enrolment has presented challenges, including low uptake of certain subjects, and a significant number of hours that have been allocated for students with SEN are used to preserve these subjects. These issues need to be addressed.

The school offers a range of optional programmes including LCA and the recently expanded TY. There is no overall programme plan in place for TY, and the LCA plan is in need of development. A new programme co-ordinator has recently been appointed. The principal should provide a clear description of this role and oversee the development of a comprehensive TY plan. The LCA plan should also be reviewed and updated in this context.

Some good timetabling practices are in place. However a few anomalies exist including the absence of sixth-year Physical Education (PE) and in one instance a class is split between two teachers to facilitate job-sharing arrangements. The board should develop a job-sharing policy, taking cognisance of Circular Letter 0075/2015 to ensure that the educational needs of students take precedence over all other considerations. Senior management articulated the importance of PE for students' health, and has reintroduced a single period this year for fifth-year students. Senior management should now undertake a curriculum review to address the issues with timetabling, and with planning for TY and LCA as outlined above.

The school's mission of providing a holistic education underpins the very good range of pastoral supports in place. The care team meets weekly and an emphasis on student wellbeing is promoted through many initiatives, including the tutor system and wellbeing team. The Chaplain, who leads regular assemblies is a strong supportive presence in the school, and the very good transition programme for first-year students is supported by staff and student mentors.

There is good provision for the delivery of guidance through weekly timetabled lessons for most senior cycle groups. Personal counselling is provided through guidance and chaplaincy. Commendably, the school's website includes a comprehensive guidance section with useful information. However the guidance plan is in need of review. A clear schedule for guidance personnel's class visits could usefully be documented, and structures for counselling referral, discrete student self-referral, and follow-up could also be clarified.

A number of good practices are in place to support students with SEN including a core team of teachers with the requisite training. A large number of non-specialist teachers are timetabled to support these students and the rationale for this in many instances is based on teacher availability rather than students' needs. Management needs to review this, and assign those with expertise accordingly. Support is mainly provided through small classes, withdrawal, and the newly-introduced team teaching.

The deployment of a significant number of the hours allocated to the school for students with SEN is not in line with the requirements of CL 0014/17. To ensure that all students with additional needs are identified and supported appropriately, senior management, in collaboration with the newly appointed co-ordinator, should review current structures and approaches in line with the National Educational Psychological Service's Continuum of Support. This review needs to include the development of student support files. To ensure that students with SEN are supported appropriately in the mainstream classroom, it is advised that all teachers familiarise themselves with *The Guidelines for Post-Primary School: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools*.

Managing the organisation

The current board of management was established in October 2018. At the time of the evaluation the board was not correctly constituted due to the absence of three KWETB nominees. The KWETB should address this without delay.

The board expressed their commitment to undertaking training and upskilling. The board should access relevant training as soon as possible. Board members articulated their commitment to the school, and have correctly identified some areas for development including teaching, learning, and policy development. The board should oversee the development of an overarching action plan based on school data relating to student outcomes to support the achievement of their priorities.

A very good range of policies has been developed in consultation with stakeholders. To ensure that all policies are reviewed regularly, a timetable should be drawn up for their systematic review.

A range of worthy strategies are in place to encourage positive behaviour, including restorative practices, an impressive merit system for first-year students and recording of both positive and challenging behaviour in journals. Positive student behaviour was observed during the evaluation and was corroborated by data from teacher questionnaires and interviews. Student responses indicated that consistent implementation of the code of behaviour warrants further investigation. To reduce suspension rates and promote positive behaviour, the strategies in place need to be implemented and monitored more consistently by all staff.

An attendance strategy is in place. Year Heads have responsibility for interventions where absenteeism patterns present and a range of strategies is in place to promote and reward good attendance. To build on this, senior management and year heads could further investigate patterns of absenteeism.

The school regularly provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes is welcome, and provides valuable professional benefits for all involved. Commendably, the school is also involved in the *Droichead* programme for the induction of new teachers.

The school building and grounds are well maintained and the board has already begun to implement plans to improve the flooring throughout the school. Many of the classrooms visited had attractive learning environments through subject-related displays.

Leading school development

Members of the senior management team manage the highly effective on-line platform used to document the school planning framework that links subject planning, school policies and improvement planning. The developmental section of the school plan would benefit from further exploration of plans for the long-term development of the school, taking cognisance of projected enrolment and curricular review.

The parents' association is strongly supportive of the school. Parents are encouraged to participate in school life and the focus-group of parents indicated that communication with staff and management is very good. Parents' input to relevant school policies, such as the healthy eating policy, is facilitated and valued.

Developing leadership capacity

The day-to-day running of the school is very good and is supported by the middle-management team comprising a committed team of assistant principals, the majority of whom are newly appointed.

Senior management empowers staff to develop leadership roles through a range of initiatives, and roles on teaching and learning committees. Continuing professional development is encouraged and uptake is very good. It is good practice that teachers are facilitated to share their experiences of using effective classroom strategies at staff meetings and that committee members report on their work at staff planning meetings.

Some very good opportunities for student leadership are facilitated through the work of the prefect system, *Gluais* mentoring system and student council. To further encourage student voice, the council should access relevant training.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of the teaching and learning observed was good or very good in the majority of lessons, and satisfactory in some.

Learner outcomes and experiences

A good rapport was noted between teachers and students in the lessons observed. Overall, teachers created a positive learning environment where students' efforts were affirmed and encouraged. Classroom interactions were congenial and student behaviour was generally very good.

Teachers provided students with opportunities to collaborate in most lessons through group or pair work. This was most effective when well-structured through clear assignment of student tasks and roles, and where sufficient time was provided for students to share and discuss their learning in the plenary session. Overall, further refinement of skills associated with group work and a clear rationale for its use is needed to maximise learning.

Students are generally taught in mixed-ability settings. Core subjects are streamed from the start of second year and the timetable facilitates movement between levels. Overall, there is scope to raise expectations of students and increase uptake of higher level where appropriate.

In lessons where more active methodologies were used and the level of challenge was appropriate, students were observed to engage effectively and to work independently in a purposeful manner. Most teachers circulated productively during lessons and provided students with constructive oral feedback. Very good practice was observed where teachers made personalised interventions to help individual students. In some lessons students needed greater support to be autonomous in their learning, and in a few instances the need for greater in-class support was evident. This should be addressed in collaboration with the SEN team.

Teachers' individual and collective practice

Lessons were generally very well prepared with a very good range of resources and materials sourced in advance. Classroom management was very good with high expectations of student behaviour and well-established classroom routines.

Where learning was most effective, the balance between teacher instruction and meaningful student activity was appropriate, and the selected teaching strategies and activities were differentiated to match the wide range of students' abilities. These approaches should be extended to all lessons.

A digital strategy is being developed, and staff and students are upskilling in the use of technology for teaching, learning, communication and collaboration. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used as a teaching and learning tool in many lessons. In a few lessons, digital presentations were used very effectively as a tool to share visuals, and engaging film clips were used to prompt discussion. This use of ICT was most effective where the activity had a clear focus. To build on this good work, a whole-school approach to the creative use of ICT should be developed as part of the school's digital strategy.

Learning intentions were shared with students in the majority of lessons. This was most effective where teachers outlined clearly what students should be able to do as well as know. A few lessons included a highly effective review of the learning intentions, where teachers provided appropriate time for the conclusion phase, and used formative assessment strategies such as exit slips and graphic organisers to check students' understanding and learning. Very good practice was evident in a few lessons where success criteria were shared with students. In the context of the Junior Cycle Framework, this approach should be extended.

Teachers used a range of questioning approaches. Lower order questions were used effectively to check students' understanding. In a few lessons higher-order questioning was used very effectively to encourage deeper student engagement with lesson content. Questioning was most effective where teachers used strategies to distribute appropriately challenging questions evenly among students, and provided sufficient wait time and scaffolding to prompt memory.

There was considerable variation in teachers' use of formative assessment to improve learning. Teachers provided effective oral feedback to students in many lessons. Students' work is generally monitored, but written formative feedback was limited. A consistent whole-school approach should be taken to the provision of written formative feedback on key pieces of student work and to students' implementation of directions for improvement.

Plans have been developed for all subject areas, most of which are available on the school's on-line platform. This very good practice facilitates the existing collaborative planning practices. Good practice noted in subject plans included details of learning outcomes, methodologies and assessment practices. Very good practice was also noted in a few instances where subject plans documented evidence-based planning for improvement. These approaches should be implemented consistently across all subject and programme plans.

Commendably teachers provide a very good variety of extra-curricular activities that create opportunities for student learning and success beyond the classroom.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Leadership and Management

Good progress has been made in the development of an overarching framework document that links policies, planning and school improvement documentation. There is scope to further develop the use of this framework to set targets for the achievement of identified school priorities. A review of posts of responsibility has been carried out twice since the previous WSE-MLL. Teaching and learning teams have been developed to address recommendations related to SSE and action planning for improvement. The recommendations related to subject planning and the use of attainment data to set specific targets for improvement in teaching, learning and attainment still require development.

Teaching and Learning

Very good progress has been made in the sharing of learning intentions, with scope to develop the review of these. Staff have received training in differentiation with a view to improved implementation in planning and teaching. Some worthy initiatives to improve practice around setting, recording and completing homework, such as the *no phone zone* to reduce distractions for students, have been introduced. There is still scope for more consistent usage and monitoring of student journals. Limited progress has been made in the recommendations for provision of written formative feedback to improve learning.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

The school's engagement in SSE has recently gained momentum and very good progress has been made. Improvement targets have been set in a range of areas including the digital learning framework, learning intentions and Wellbeing. Baseline and improvement data has been gathered, mainly through questionnaires, to support the development of action plans. Current targets are focused mainly on improved teacher engagement with classroom strategies. The self-evaluation process could now be used to identify targets with a greater focus on effective implementation of such strategies.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has seen significant changes in personnel in recent years including the newly expanded middle management team. This provides an opportune time to use this valuable resource to implement the whole-school structures needed, such as provision of job descriptions for post-holders, and formalisation of systems such as tracking and monitoring, to achieve the board's identified priorities. With the implementation of such structures, the school has very good capacity for improvement. This is evident in the development of leadership capacity among staff, the hard work and enthusiasm of the teaching and learning teams, and staff and management's positive attitude toward improvement.

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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Coláiste Chiaráin welcomes this positive and affirming WSE-MLL report identifying the school's key strengths:

- Quality of teaching and learning - good or very good.
- Day-to-day running of school - very good, supported by committed team of assistant principals.
- Very good range of pastoral supports for students' care/wellbeing.
- Very good range of policies developed in consultation with stakeholders.
- Positive developments in leading learning by SMT
- Good practices in place re students with SEN
- Some very good opportunities for student leadership - Prefects, Gluais and Student Council.
- Good rapport between teachers/students. Students affirmed and encouraged. Classroom interactions congenial.
- Commendations re Droichead programme, the maintenance of the school building/grounds and the very good variety of extra-curricular activities.
- Strong support of parents
- Very good capacity for school improvement - leadership capacity among staff, hard work and enthusiasm of teaching and learning teams, staff and management's positive attitude toward improvement.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The BOM acknowledges recommendations made in the report. Work to address these recommendations has already commenced and the board will take an active part in leading and supporting their successful implementation.

- The Senior Management Team (SMT) will undertake a curriculum review to address the sustainability of subjects with low uptake before timetabling for 2019-20.
- The Principal will oversee the development of TY and LCA policies. The Board is developing a schedule for the updating of school policies.
- In 2018 Coláiste Chiaráin had a reduction of over 4 teachers in its teaching allocation. The board and the SMT were uncomfortable in using some of the SEN allocation to support existing subject provision but it had no choice. This anomaly will be addressed in timetabling for 2019-20.
- The board has identified the roles and responsibilities for post holders. Further development in detailing will be carried out before the commencement of the school year, 2019-20. A review of posts is planned for next year.
- The school's TL21 committee has made significant progress in the preparation of a homework policy.
- The school has begun the process of student academic tracking. Subject planning will be developed to include evidence-based planning for improvement.
- Based on the **many positive aspects recognised in the report**, the school will:
 - **Further** empower staff, developing leadership capacity and leading learning through a range of initiatives in SSE
 - **Continue to** promote professional development and the good practice where teachers are facilitated to share effective classroom strategies at staff meetings.

- **Continue** to develop school self-evaluation where very good progress has been acknowledged as was the good practice of teachers sharing effective classroom practices at staff meetings which will also be advanced.
- **Further develop** the range of worthy strategies to encourage positive behaviour, including restorative practices, the impressive merit system for first and second year students that builds on the positive student behaviour observed during the evaluation. As suggested we have now made links between the 1st & 2nd year merit system and homework.
- **Further develop** the highly effective online platform used to document the school planning framework that links subject planning, school policies and improvement planning.
- **Continue to** engage with the Droichead programme as a programme of induction for newly qualified teachers.
- **Continue to** develop the school's digital strategy and promote staff and students' upskilling in the use of technology for teaching, learning, communication and collaboration.