

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Caimin's Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Tullyvarraga Shannon County Clare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	914471

Date of Evaluation: 21-11-2019



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 meets 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	11, 12, and 13 November 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

St. Caimin's is a multi-denominational community school. The trustees of the school are the Bishop of Killaloe and the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. Its catchment area includes Shannon, Newmarket on Fergus, Sixmilebridge and Cratloe. Originally founded in 1985, the existing building was built on the site in 2002 as part of the first bundle of Public Private Partnership schools. Enrolment currently stands at 759 students. The school provides a broad range of subjects. As well as Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certificate programme, it offers Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) on an optional basis.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- This is a well-run school, setting high expectations for students and staff in relation to continuous improvement, where teachers provide an extensive programme of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to support the holistic development of students.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is high, guided by a senior management team and board of management combining proactive planning, energy, and commitment; aspects of student support are in need of improvement.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high, with very good or excellent practices observed in the majority of lessons; satisfactory practice was observed in a small number of lessons.
- Very good progress has been achieved in advancing teachers' collaborative planning and in embedding continuous assessment practices; assessment for learning, in-class support for learning needs, and formative feedback are areas for further development.
- Progress on management-related recommendations from previous evaluations is good, and overall progress on frequently recurring teaching and learning recommendations is satisfactory to date.
- There has been very strong whole-school promotion of school self-evaluation (SSE) since 2012 and some notable achievements in many areas; varying levels of implementation of targeted teaching methodologies associated with the last three SSE plans were noted during lesson observations.

Recommendations

- Student supports should be further developed by revising the operation of student support team meetings, by establishing timetabled class tutor periods as part of the junior cycle wellbeing provision, and by strengthening the positive behaviour management practices.
- The provision of support to students with additional educational needs (AENs) should be reviewed in relation to Circular 14/2017 and the associated best practice guidelines, with the timetabling of AEN resources among a smaller core team, providing interventions focused on identified and priority learning needs.
- Consistent, high-quality practices in relation to assessment for learning, in-class support for learning needs, and formative feedback need to be developed in all lessons; harnessing in-house expertise by integrating digital and SSE actions will help achieve this.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall quality of leadership and management is high.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leading learning and teaching

Senior management combines energy, commitment and leadership. It is a proactive team, making good progress leading learning and teaching. This is evident from numerous initiatives ongoing in the school. Academic monitoring is engaged in by year heads. A culture of collaborative peer review, contributing to very effective teaching practice, has been established, in conjunction with the Droichead programme. There has been very strong promotion of SSE targets at whole-school level since 2012.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, incorporating a sampling programme for optional subjects in first year. Very good programme planning is in place. A curriculum review team commenced work this autumn, with some key areas for consideration having been scoped out already. Other considerations to factor into that review include destination trends gathered by the Guidance Counsellor; senior cycle physical education provision; and trends in state examination results, particularly at junior cycle, to see where supports may be needed. Curriculum review should also incorporate consultation with students and parents.

Student support permeates school life and the overall quality of care for students is good. Very positive feedback was gathered from questionnaires returned by teachers, parents, from a student focus group, and from inspectors' observations of teacher-student relationships in lessons. The school seeks to promote a holistic sense of success through co-curricular and extra-curricular projects, themed wellbeing weeks, various clubs and teachers' voluntary training of a variety of teams in different sports. The school links with outside agencies to help provide student care as well as guiding students to care for each other through a Saint Vincent de Paul club and a LGBTQ+ club.

Student management practices are shaped by the code of behaviour. Evidence from meeting minutes reviewed and from interviews is that some behaviours that are relatively minor are being accelerated too quickly up the disciplinary ladder. Repeated detentions are not addressing the lack of homework completion/materials for some students. A discipline committee has been formed to address this and restorative practice continuing professional development (CPD) has been booked.

To strengthen the positive behaviour management practices, a number of areas for development exist. The ladder of referral in the code of behaviour should be made clearer by presenting it through a referral and consequences table. The current class tutor system involves teachers monitoring student journals during their subject class time but with no defined pastoral role or time to talk to students. A timetabled class tutor period for junior cycle students should now be established, as part of the wellbeing programme, to engage with students positively and proactively. Finally, a greater range of information needs to be provided to mainstream teachers on how to support the learning of students with social, emotional, and/or behavioural learning needs, along with relevant CPD.

The chaplain and guidance counsellor work very well together and are key members of the student support team (SST), along with the additional educational needs co-ordinator and senior management. Currently, there is a disconnect between the work of the SST and that of year heads, whose weekly meeting tends to focus on organisational and disciplinary issues. It is recommended that the SST model of working, as set out in *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools* (National Educational Psychological Service publication) guidelines, be established, bringing year heads into the SST.

The newly appointed co-ordinator for AEN works well with the year head for first year students to gather information about incoming first years from their primary schools. There are very systematic arrangements for seeking supports for students in respect of Reasonable Accommodations at State Examinations (RACE). An online folder summarising students' AENs is available to all teachers. However, the school's model of AEN provision has not changed in line with the continuum of support and Circular 14/2017.

A number of areas for improvement exist in the provision of AEN support. Whole-school CPD from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) on the key principles of the continuum of support and on Circular 14/2017 should be sought, to help teachers understand changes now necessary in in-school practice. The utilisation of AEN hours needs to be reviewed in line with Circular 14/2017 and the associated best practice guidelines. Currently, over two-thirds of the teaching staff provide elements of AEN support. A smaller core team of teachers providing AEN support needs to be created, for collaborative planning and review. More targeted, individualised planning approaches need to be developed, providing students with interventions focused on their identified and priority learning needs. There should be greater involvement of parents in the development of their child's learning plans and individual student plans should be agreed with parents.

Managing the organisation

Management of the organisation is very good. Multiple, effective communication systems are in place. Teachers who completed a questionnaire agreed that there is good communication among staff. In questionnaire returns, parents and teachers agreed that the school is well run.

A number of board members have strong personal links to the school and are deeply committed to its ongoing development. The board engages in very good governance practices and oversight of teaching and learning, receiving regular updates on SSE work, student achievement, and on priorities in the school plan. The board has decided recently to post its agreed reports on the school website, to support communication; this is indicative of very good practice.

The school is very well presented and very well maintained. All staff engage in good annual risk assessment practices. The canteen cannot cater adequately for the entire student population during break-times, and classrooms are locked at break times, leading to numerous students sitting on corridors to eat their lunches. Senior management has plans to install additional seating along corridors to cater for this need.

Good progress has been achieved in strategically developing the digital infrastructure and in compiling a digital learning plan, through high-quality engagement by post-holders and by volunteer peer mentors. Key advances have been made in supporting teachers' collaborative planning and in some aspects of students' learning. Slower progress has been made in teachers' incorporation of digital technologies to support learning beyond the use of PowerPoint, internet clips, and internet research. It is advised that examples of very good in-house practice be captured electronically to create a CPD resource of in-house, innovative uses of technology to support learning. Also, specific training on the use of mobile devices would be beneficial to support formative feedback and assessment for learning approaches.

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

Leading school development

The leadership of school development is very good. A very comprehensive school plan has been compiled, evolving annually based on previous drafts. At present, this plan is prepared by senior management, based on feedback from staff and from a small number of parents and students. The plan is discussed by the board and available to staff electronically. No formal input from the parents' council or from the students' council has been incorporated into the plan to date.

A few additional steps are needed to activate the school plan as a guiding vision for school development. Relevant in-house evidence sources should also be included in the formulation of priorities, such as WSE-MLL questionnaire findings, submissions on priorities for subject development, and relevant trends extracted from the student management software such as attendance and performance. The views of parents and students on the listed priorities should be gathered and any additional priorities suggested captured. Agreed annual targets should be shared regularly with all stakeholders and progress should be reviewed annually, with revised or new targets to guide school development.

Of the parents who responded to the Inspectorate survey, almost all indicated that they feel welcome in the school, students are doing well and they are happy with the school overall. Strengthening communication channels with parents is a key element of the school's work. In addition to standard parent-teacher meetings and information evenings, excellent newsletters and calendars related to the assessment arrangements have been provided to first and second-year parents. School management also provides updates at each meeting of the parents' council. Significant time and energy are invested in developing social media feeds of school and student activities to communicate with parents, students and the wider school community. To address questionnaire feedback from parents regarding subject-choice support, the posting of additional materials in relation to subject choice and other guidance information on the school website is advised.

Developing leadership capacity

Given that a significant number of leadership appointments were made over the past two years, building a strong culture of distributed leadership is a key priority for school management. As part of the 2020 review of posts, the tasks being performed currently by senior and middle management should be reviewed, in relation to the school's strategic priorities and emerging needs, to seek alignment of roles with areas of school life where leadership is needed.

There is a strong culture of individual teachers engaging in further professional studies and in feeding back key learning to colleagues. Senior management is committed to providing a blend of internally and externally sourced CPD to support teachers and post holders, as well as looking outward to gather ideas from other schools on additional ways of organising school life. Such an approach is highly commended. To ensure that whole-school CPD needed for improvement can be facilitated during the school year, the balance of ten Croke Park hours allocated currently for planning and development work, other than on a whole-school basis, should be reviewed.

Students report that they get on well with each other and that they value the supports for curricular and extra-curricular learning provided to them. In questionnaire responses, however, many students indicated that they did not have a say in how things are done in the school. A democratically elected student council representing all year groups meets periodically and is supported by a student liaison teacher. However, the council is not functioning as an effective representative group for the student body. It gathers an unwieldy number of members with no formal training for their roles, it is not formally consulted for feedback on draft school policies, and has no fixed communication mechanism with students about its activities. At the time of the evaluation, work had commenced on enabling the student council to play a more active, visible role in school life. Establishing varied communication channels for student council activities is needed.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning is high, with very good or excellent practices observed in the majority of lessons; satisfactory practice was observed in a small number of lessons.

Learner outcomes and experiences

During the evaluation, all teachers fostered positive classroom atmospheres and respectful student-teacher relationships. Where the learner experience was most effective, concrete or digital resources were used to activate students' interest in topics and to support their learning. Also, well-planned tasks led to purposeful student engagement and successful outcomes. In addition, classroom environments featuring student work and customised desk layout created motivational spaces for learning. In the small number of lessons where the learner experience needed to be improved, a greater balance of teacher/student activity and assessment for learning strategies needed to be incorporated.

Teachers shared learning intentions with students at the outset of most lessons, but generally did not revisit them effectively to assess students' understanding. Some teachers were observed engaging in very good ongoing assessment-for-learning practices, monitoring how students were mastering a skill or concept through an in-class task, identifying which students were struggling with the skill or concept, and then adjusting future lesson plans, to develop mastery before moving to the next topic. This practice needs to be developed more widely.

Teachers' individual practice

Where very good, lessons were well prepared, underpinned by very good teacher specialist knowledge and with high expectations set for ability and knowledge. Students were encouraged and supported to do their best and learn from mistakes. A strength of almost all lessons observed was good teacher questioning, developing critical thinking skills as well as checking recall and recognition. Also, teachers created regular opportunities for students to work together.

There were good levels of differentiation in most lessons, through oral teacher feedback, targeted questions, carefully planned pair/group formation to support collaborative task completion and the use of graphic organisers to help students organise information extraction or recording. Two areas for development were noted in the area of in-class support for students' learning needs. First, team teaching CPD should be provided to ensure that roles and responsibilities are planned collaboratively by teachers for lessons and that learner outcomes benefit from the deployment of a second teacher in the room. Also, a greater range of information needs to be provided to mainstream teachers on how to support the learning of students with AENs.

Some excellent practices were noted in a small number of lessons in relation to giving students formative feedback. Some very good written formative feedback was noted in copies in a few lessons. In one lesson, digital technology and success criteria were used together to make exemplars of standard visible and to model ways of improving pieces of work, providing very powerful support to learner outcomes. However, in most lessons there were missed formative feedback opportunities.

Given that there are some excellent in-house practices of providing formative feedback in different ways, it is recommended that exemplars of those in-house practices be captured digitally, to support the development of this practice across the school. Varied strategies can be promoted, including teachers giving written formative feedback on a few copies in each lesson and instructing students to write down oral feedback given to them by their teachers. Furthermore, teachers can co-create success criteria with students, in conjunction with utilising digital technology to make exemplars of work visible, to support self, peer and teacher feedback and student learning.

Teachers' collective/collaborative practice

High levels of collaborative planning were reported. The school has made highly commended progress in moving toward a culture of continuous assessment at junior cycle, with some progress in this regard at senior cycle. This broadening of assessment modes is highly commended, helping students to develop skills as well as knowledge, and incentivising continuous effort and application. The formulation of a whole-school assessment policy is advised to support parents' understanding of the key changes that have been introduced in school assessment practices.

The sample of subject plans evaluated ranged in quality from excellent to satisfactory. Noteworthy features of the best plans included targeted action planning for ongoing subject/programme improvement, teacher reflection, and teacher engagement with new subject specifications, key skills, and SSE targets.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

Progress on management-related recommendations from previous evaluations is good, and overall progress on frequently recurring teaching and learning recommendations is satisfactory to date.

Leadership and Management

There has been good overall progress in implementing management-related recommendations from a 2012 WSE-MLL report, with work still needed on supporting the student council.

Teaching and Learning

Progress in four recent subject inspections was reviewed, along with the recommendation of greater utilisation of written formative feedback in the 2012 WSE-MLL. Collective action in response to subject planning recommendations varied in quality, with very good English and Mathematics planning progress noted. Overall, fair progress has been made in relation to the greater utilisation of formative feedback practices beyond oral feedback. Departments should engage in annual formal target setting on key recommendations from recent subject inspections, to guide implementation by teachers and oversight by the board.

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

The School's Self-Evaluation Process

There has been very strong whole-school promotion of school self-evaluation (SSE) over the years since 2012, with five SSE plans published in that period. Appropriately, the SSE team has paused the development of new SSE plans, to review achievements and challenges to date.

Strengths of the engagement with SSE have been the communication of all plans through the website, oversight of progress by the board, and the linking of SSE focus areas with priority student needs and with Junior Cycle implementation. Key progress has been made in relation to the literacy, numeracy and learning to learn plans, in subject department planning, and in developing continuous assessment at junior cycle. Observations of lessons during the WSE-MLL identified varying levels of implementation of targeted pedagogies associated with the last three SSE plans: learning intentions, success criteria, assessment for learning techniques, and formative feedback. It is accepted that pedagogical change takes significant time to achieve. Returning to the *Focus on Learning* resource created by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and using it as a source of in-house CPD is recommended, to ensure a common understanding of the rationale for formative assessment strategies. So too is the creation of in-house digital exemplars of very good practice. Harnessing in-house expertise by integrating digital and SSE actions will help achieve this.

The School's Capacity for Improvement

The school has a very high capacity for improvement, based on the strong culture of staff professionalism and collaboration that has been developed, on senior management's strategic leadership, and on the board of management's earnest commitment to the school.

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 (BOM) of St. Caimin's Community School welcomes the very positive WSE/MLL report and congratulates all involved for their hard work and commitment which was acknowledged and validated so favourably throughout this report. The BOM would like to highlight their satisfaction that the following was observed and acknowledged:

- 1) St. Caimin's Community School is fully compliant in all matters relating to child protection.
- 2) That the commitment, energy and planning of the senior leadership and management team and the BOM is of a high standard.
- 3) The school offers a breadth of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities which support the holistic development of students.
- 4) That teaching and learning was recognised as being of a very high quality with very good or excellent practices observed in the majority of lessons.
- 5) That the progress achieved in advancing teachers' collaborative planning and in embedding continuous assessment practices was evident and
- 6) That there has been very strong whole-school promotion of school self-evaluation (SSE) since 2012

The BOM is extremely proud that the report highlights that this is a well-run school, setting high expectations for students and staff in relation to continuous improvement.

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 BOM of St. Caimin's Community School welcomes the recommendations received and is fully committed to continue working in partnership with staff, students, parents/guardians and the wider community to implement the recommendations in this report.

Recommendation 1:

- For the academic year 2020 -2021 it is envisaged that the year heads and the Student support team will meet weekly to further develop student support systems.
- As part of our curriculum review (which was already in progress prior to the WSE/MLL) we intend timetabling a tutor period at junior cycle.
- Our discipline committee has already started work in making the Code of Behaviour more student friendly. Restorative practice training has been provided and will be developed over the coming year.

Recommendation 2:

- The new senior management team and newly appointed AEN coordinator have started work in reviewing the allocation of AEN resources. Requests have been made to the NCSE and the PDST for training in the area of AEN and Team Teaching.
- For the academic year 2020 – 2021 it is envisaged that there will be a smaller AEN core team to provide interventions to students with additional educational needs.

Recommendation 3:

- Prior to the WSE/MLL work had begun to ensure that the targets and actions of the 5 previous School Improvement Plans have been embedded appropriately at whole school, department and classroom levels.
- The SSE team have worked on providing formal and informal CPD in the area of Assessment for Learning with particular focus on Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and Formative Feedback.
- The SSE team are capturing and sharing examples of good practice and also developing a series of Teaching and Learning newsletters to help disseminate these practices among the staff.

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;