

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Ciaran's Community School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Navan Rd Kells Co Meath
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91456J

**Date of Evaluation: 08-02-2019**



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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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 did not meet the requirements in relation to check 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken at the time of the evaluation.

## WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	4-6 February 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with Board of Management</li> <li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principal</li> <li>• Meetings with key staff</li> <li>• Review of relevant documents</li> <li>• Student focus-group interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with parents</li> <li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li> <li>• Examination of students' work</li> <li>• Interaction with students</li> <li>• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers</li> </ul>

### School context

Saint Ciaran's Community School was established in 1988 and has a current enrolment of 631 students: 511 boys and 120 girls. The school provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes.

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of school management and leadership is satisfactory; leadership of some areas of educational provision, and systems which support students to fully realise their potential require development.
- The recently appointed senior management team is strongly committed to leading teaching and learning; very good progress is evident in initiatives aimed at enhancing learners' experiences.
- Management and staff are very committed to providing a holistic learner experience; work is required to ensure that aspects of the student-support structures, including provision for special education needs (SEN) and the promotion of student voice are highly effective.
- Full provision is not being made for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).
- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good; teaching and assessment approaches which facilitate active learning and student reflection on progress require development.
- The overall implementation of recommendations from previous inspections is good and the school has good capacity for improvement; evolving structures will support the school improvement agenda currently underway.

#### Recommendations

- School management should make full provision for senior cycle RSE.
- An evidence-based tracking system should be established to track students' progress, inform planning for appropriate support interventions and ensure that expectations for achievement are appropriately high.
- Planning and providing for students with SEN should be re-organised in accordance with circular letter 0070/2014.
- A steering group should be established to further develop and oversee progress in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020.
- Teaching approaches that facilitate high-quality active learning and provide for highly-effective formative assessment of students' work should be further developed.
- A student council should be established to enhance the student voice within the school.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall quality of school management and leadership is satisfactory. While some very good initiatives are currently underway, the leadership of some areas of educational provision, and structures which support students to fully realise their potential need attention.

#### **Leading learning and teaching**

A new senior management team was appointed in September 2018. This team is strongly committed to building a culture of reflection, collaboration and creativity in classroom practice. The team actively promotes continuous improvement in teaching and learning. Deliberate efforts are being made to facilitate effective teacher collaborative practice with some good progress evident.

A recently-established teaching and learning committee organised a practice-sharing event which was led by teachers who had attended training to support teaching and learning. The workshops allowed staff to experience first-hand the positive impact that active methodologies have on enhancing learner experiences. This is a highly commendable means of building teachers' capacity and facilitating reflective practice. Staff are engaging fully with Junior Cycle continuing professional development (CPD). This is impacting positively on the quality of learner experiences in lessons.

The board of management supports staff CPD and almost all teachers are deployed in line with their expertise. Some specialist gaps in the teaching staff were apparent during the evaluation. Given that a new senior management team is in place, it is an opportune time to conduct an audit of staff specialisms and training needs, and to systematically plan a programme of CPD to address any deficit identified.

A broad curriculum is provided to meet students' needs. The subject-sampling programme in first year assists students to make informed subject choices. The senior cycle programmes all provide a good range of learning experiences for students. However, the absence of co-ordinators and core teams for LCA and TY is negatively impacting on collaborative planning for these programmes. These core teams should be re-established and the vacant post of programme co-ordinator should be filled. The potential of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme should also be examined.

Questionnaire data highlights inconsistencies in the quality of the learning experiences in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). A core SPHE team should be established to lead and implement an agreed programme plan from first year through to third year.

Full provision is not being made for senior cycle RSE. The programme is currently provided by external facilitators. An RSE programme should be developed and delivered by suitably trained teachers, to ensure full compliance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017. External facilitators can be used to complement but not replace provision at school level. A whole-school RSE policy needs to be developed, in accordance with circular letter 0037/2010.

A range of extra-curricular activities is available for students, and the commitment of staff to providing these activities is acknowledged. Parent and student feedback indicates a need to review the effectiveness of systems which support continuity of learning for students who miss lessons during these activities.

During the evaluation, the teachers, parents and students who met with the inspection team identified a need for the school to develop a stronger culture of high expectations for student

achievement. A range of internal procedures need further development to ensure that sufficiently high expectations are set, and that all students are achieving to their full potential.

All students are assigned to mixed-ability classes in first year. In the case of English, Irish and Maths, classes are set from second year. Procedures for assigning students to classes and choosing levels need to be reviewed to ensure that assessment and oversight procedures are sufficiently rigorous, and that students are not choosing subjects at ordinary level too early.

A more rigorous tracking system that monitors students' academic progress is required. There is significant scope to use school assessment and attainment data more effectively to support action planning for improved learner outcomes and experiences. School management should establish an evidence-based tracking system that makes full use of baseline data to monitor student progress and support action planning for improvement at whole-school and subject-department levels, and inform planning for interventions to support students who may experience difficulties.

The school is committed to providing for students with additional needs, including students for whom English is an additional Language (EAL). While the overall quality of provision for students with SEN is satisfactory, there are evident weaknesses in some planning and organisational structures. At the time of the evaluation a significant proportion of hours designated for the provision of SEN was not being used for their intended purpose and this should be addressed.

There are a number of staff with specialist qualifications in SEN, but these teachers are not timetabled to support the students with the greatest level of need. While it is good practice that a core team of SEN teachers meets weekly; the large cohort of additional teachers providing SEN support only meets informally. This arrangement makes it very difficult to co-ordinate or target interventions which are adequately aligned to students' needs. It is recommended that planning and providing for students with SEN be reviewed to ensure that it is in accordance with CL 14/2017 and relevant guidelines.

Year heads play a pivotal role in supporting students as they progress in the school. The recently-introduced tutor system is effective in supporting students to feel a sense of belonging, and in supporting them to develop self-organisational routines. A written programme should be developed for tutor time to optimise the cross-curricular synergies which exist between subjects like SPHE, Physical Education (PE), Guidance, and relevant whole-school events.

The school has identified a need to review and re-frame the current code of behaviour to provide for a greater focus on positive behaviour support. The revised code should be underpinned by an affirming and positive approach to behaviour management.

While provision for whole-school guidance is satisfactory, there is scope to enhance the effectiveness and efficacy of provision. The school benefits from the services of a full-time school guidance counsellor and a school chaplain. Timetabled Guidance is provided to students in TY and sixth year. Consideration should be given to providing timetabled Guidance to other year groups, on a modular basis.

Currently there are care team meetings for each year group. This may not be the most effective use of personnel and resources. A single, overarching Student Support Team should be established in line with the *NEPS Guidelines Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools (2014)*. Counselling roles also need to be streamlined to ensure that counselling is provided solely by personnel who are appropriately qualified and who attend personal supervision.

At the time of the evaluation there was no ratified whole-school Guidance Plan. The board should oversee the development the Guidance Plan in accordance with relevant Department guidelines. Additionally, this process should be used to review the effectiveness of implementation of all school

policies relating to student wellbeing, as questionnaire data from students and parents indicates need for such a review.

### **Managing the organisation**

The quality of school governance is satisfactory. Board members are very committed to the school and have commendable level of shared expertise and continue to access appropriate CPD. Currently there is one vacancy at board level, which needs to be filled and this should be addressed as soon as is feasible. While the board demonstrates a good level of awareness of its role, there is a need to strengthen procedures to support its oversight role in leading and managing the school.

While an agreed report is provided to stakeholders after each board meeting; questionnaire data indicates a need for the board to strengthen procedures for reporting on its leadership role to stakeholders.

The board is currently overseeing the updating of a large number of school policies. The collaborative approach used to progress this work is illustrative of very good practice. A significant number of mandatory policies remain in need of development. The board should develop a sufficiently robust system for updating policies.

The members of the senior management team work very well together. Their individual skill sets, together with their collaborative and consultative leadership style, provides an effective synergy that serves the school well. A very good range of appropriate CPD is being accessed. During the evaluation staff welcomed the clear incremental change agenda being progressed by senior management.

There are currently eight vacancies at middle management level. These posts need to be filled as a matter of priority so that the potential of the school's middle management structure is fully realised. The board recently led a very good consultative review of the post schedule.

The school building is well maintained and the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure is being upgraded on a phased basis. The board should make arrangements for the preparation an updated health and safety statement.

### **Leading school development**

In 2016 the board engaged an external consultant to facilitate the development of an ambitious school improvement plan; *Strategic Plan 2017-2020*. The steering committee established at that time led a commendable consultative process that confirmed and re-affirmed the school's holistic educational vision. While this plan has informed on-going school development, some refinements are necessary to facilitate a highly-effective school planning process.

The strategic plan needs to be developed to include action plans aimed specifically at on-going development in learner outcomes and experiences. The school self-evaluation (SSE) school improvement plans should also be incorporated into the document. A steering group should be established to lead the further development and monitoring of progress of the plan.

The school is very welcoming of parents. Parent questionnaire responses indicate high levels of satisfaction with the information received on school reports and at parent-teacher meetings. However, the effectiveness of procedures for informing parents on more routine matters relating their child's on-going progress needs review.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

Post-holders play a key role in supporting the work of the senior management team. The regular meetings of year heads provide particularly effective support to senior management.

Staff members work well together and it is good practice that teachers are afforded opportunities to lead initiatives. A number of key teams are supporting the work of students and staff in an effective manner. Teacher questionnaire data indicate a need to develop further procedures to support new staff.

The school provides placements for student teachers. Such engagement in initial teacher education programmes can provide valuable professional benefits for teachers, student-teachers and learners.

Leadership opportunities are provided for students through the prefect system and student voice committee. The SSE process also provides opportunities for student input. However, there is a significant need to enhance the student voice in the school. The board should establish a democratically-elected student council. Appropriate training should be accessed by members.

## **2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. However, the quality varied between individual lessons. Very good practice was noted in a significant minority of lessons. In a few instances, there was some scope for development in the quality of lesson planning.

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

High levels of student engagement were evident in lessons where the activities were planned to effectively support active and incremental learning. Student engagement was optimal in lessons where the planned activities supported meaningful learning and built on students' prior knowledge and interests.

Learner outcomes were significantly enhanced in lessons where the intended learning and success criteria were communicated clearly, and when the lesson structure provided sufficient opportunity to consolidate and assess learning. In a small number of instances students did not demonstrate high levels of interest in lesson content.

Students responded very well when classroom strategies enabled them to take responsibility for their learning, and where appropriately high expectations for learning were set. Very good learner outcomes were noted when clear classroom routines were implemented for the maintenance of student journals, copybooks, and for the completion of homework. Expectations for student achievement varied across lessons, with significant variation in the standard of written work reviewed during the evaluation. A consistent whole-school approach to the maintenance of high expectations in these areas is required.

Collaborative learning approaches featured in the majority of lessons observed. Students demonstrated a good ability to work independently and collaboratively, when challenged to do so. The collaborative learning tasks also provided valuable opportunities for learners who were less able to receive additional support from their peers and teacher. In a few instances, valuable extension activities were provided to challenge more able students. There was a better balance between teacher and student voice when meaningful co-operative learning was facilitated. Teachers should collectively explore the full potential of these strategies to enhance active learning and support the student voice within lessons.

Orderly and stimulating learning environments were created in almost all lessons. This was especially evident in some teacher-based classrooms where students' work was displayed alongside useful subject-related materials. There is significant scope to extend this practice and to develop the learning potential of the school environment beyond the classroom. Displays of students' work in

curricular and extra-curricular activities should be developed to celebrate students' achievements and promote high expectations for a learning.

### **Teachers' individual and collective practice**

Overall, planning and preparation for lessons was good. In some instances, the pace or pitch of the lesson content required adjustment to a level more commensurate with students' needs.

There was some very good use of additional resources to support learning. Digital presentations and film clips were used effectively to clarify and illustrate information. Highly-effective learning was facilitated when students were provided with prompt questions in advance of watching film clips or completing tasks.

In a majority of lessons, a whole-class approach to teaching and learning prevailed, with the same content and tasks delivered to all students in the same way. Further attention should be given to planning for differentiation of instruction and tasks, based on students' individual needs and strengths.

The overall quality of formative assessment practices observed was satisfactory. Learning intentions were routinely shared in lessons. However, the strategy of sharing success criteria or assessing progress of learning intentions was underutilised. Some lessons would have benefitted from more comprehensive consolidation and assessment of learning.

Questioning was used to assess students' prior knowledge and for recapitulation. In some instances, questions were limited to teacher-student questioning, with students providing brief answers. Teachers should use a wider range of questioning strategies which challenge students to provide well-developed answers and effectively assess progress and understanding.

A review of students' journals and copybooks indicated that teachers are not always consistent in assigning and monitoring homework. While some good use of comment marking was noted on student copybooks, there is scope to extend this practice. In many lessons, teachers provided valuable oral feedback on students' work. In some cases, there was a need for students to take responsibility for noting teacher comments. Self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies should be further developed.

Overall, there is scope to extend the range of teaching and learning approaches used in lessons. It is recommended that teaching and learning approaches that facilitate high-quality active learning and highly-effective formative assessment should be further developed and integrated into lessons.

Teachers' collaborative practice is good. Subject departments are well established and the school's electronic platform is proving effective in supporting high-quality collaboration. There was some variation in the quality of programme plans reviewed. Plans that demonstrated clear incremental progression in learning, and outlined specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies were illustrative of very good practice.

Subject teams have begun to analyse examination outcomes but a deeper level of analysis is required. While some positive developments are noted, attainment and the challenge of raising expectations remain areas for development. Subject teams should use the outcomes of an analysis of attainment data to develop subject-specific action plans that identify specific priorities and strategies which will support student learning and negate any identified barriers to success.



### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

#### **Leadership and Management**

School management and subject teams have made good progress in implementing recommendations to enhance teachers' collaborative practice. Routine health and safety audits are also now completed. Areas such as action planning for on-going improvement in teaching and learning by subject teams require further development.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

Good progress is apparent in implementing recommendations relating to classroom practice. The work of the SSE committees and the teaching and learning committee is proving effective in supporting this work. Differentiation and formative assessment practices need further development.

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

#### **The School's Self-Evaluation Process**

Some good use has been made of the six-step SSE process to support on-going improvement in teaching and learning. School improvement plans in literacy and numeracy have been developed and active learning has been identified as a third theme. Systems that facilitate the monitoring and review of targets need development. The vacant position of SSE co-ordinator should be filled in order to maintain a momentum for this good work.

#### **The School's Capacity for Improvement**

The school has good capacity for improvement. The evolving structures and systems will prove very useful in supporting the school improvement agenda currently underway. School management and staff are ready to embrace new challenges and are committed to school improvement. The soon-to-be filled posts of responsibility should greatly enhance the school's capacity to improve. However, closer oversight of the strategic planning process is essential. Parents and students are committed to the school and their further input is key in creating shared ownership of the school improvement agenda.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The reference to our senior management team with their collaborative and consultative leadership style, and who are committed to leading teaching and learning and to building a culture of reflection, collaboration and creativity in classroom practice was welcome.

Management and staff are certainly committed to providing a holistic learner experience, broad curriculum and a wide range of extracurricular activities and the commitment of staff was acknowledged. It was highlighted that our teachers work well together, their collaborative practice is good and that they are afforded opportunities to lead initiatives.

We welcome the acknowledgement that the quality of teaching and learning observed was good. Our practice-sharing event was highly commended as a means of building teachers' capacity and facilitating reflective practice. Overall, planning and preparation for lessons was good, there was some very good use of additional resources to support learning and high levels of student engagement were evident in lessons. Collaborative learning approaches featured in the majority of lessons observed. Students demonstrated a good ability to work independently and collaboratively.

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

In relation to RSE, a core team of trained teachers has been identified. The core team of teachers are now developing a programme for RSE. Our RSE draft policy is currently under review to ensure it is line with circular 0037/2010. Another teacher has since completed RSE training in March and further opportunities will be given to others who wish to train in this area.

We are currently appointing seven positions at AP11 level. Tracking of student progress is a priority and will be addressed with the AP11 Appointments. First year incoming test results as well as in-house examinations will be used to measure student performance in the junior house while on-going tracking of in-house examinations will take place for senior students. Such tracking will identify areas in need of improvement and will allow interventions to be put in place at the earliest possible stage to support students in reaching their potential and therefore raise academic expectations.

A student council will be established in May 2019 and this as well as our current Student voice, will provide student leadership opportunities while ensuring that the valuable voice of the student is heard and used to further improve our school.

Our SEN Policy was ratified in March 2019. Our SEN Department has received further CPD through NEPS where links will be made to share best practice among schools. A review of the organisation of the SEN is under way which involves:

- Identifying Link teachers to different year groups
- Core SEN Teachers will be timetabled for SEN
- Implementing the new model of SEN
- Team teaching CPD for all teachers has been booked for August 2019
- Tractability of SEN hours
- Implementation of targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy

We are reviewing our SSE plan and the committee has since had a support meeting with the PDST which has given us a future focus on formative feedback, self & peer assessment and sharing success criteria. The committee will continue to lead initiatives such as our in-house CPD

workshops. A committee will be put in place to review targets set out in the strategic plan and action plans with revised timelines will be implemented by September 2019.

## 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;