

**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>	Kinsale Community School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Kinsale Co Cork
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91499E

**Date of Evaluation: 16-03-2017**



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

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

## **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

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

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

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	16-03-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <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

Kinsale Community School is a co-educational community school which operates under the joint trusteeship of the Mercy Congregation and Cork Education and Training Board (CETB). The school was founded in 1996 and has undergone a significant growth in student numbers in the intervening period. Current enrolment is 910 students. At the time of the evaluation, extensive building work was underway to accommodate this growth in numbers. The current building project incorporates general and specialist classrooms, an information and communications technology (ICT) centre, a prayer room, and a canteen. Facilities for Physical Education (PE) will be considerably enhanced through the addition of a new PE hall, an astroturf pitch, tennis courts and an athletics track. The school provides a broad curriculum which offers all available programmes, including the junior cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Kinsale Community School is a vibrant, inclusive school community with strong links to the local community.
- The board of management is highly effective and has identified appropriate strategic priorities; a few elements of policy documents and processes require adjustment.
- There is a highly effective senior management team.
- High expectations of staff and students are evident throughout the school community.
- The school's work in the area of continuing professional development (CPD) is of an excellent standard.
- The school is undertaking many aspects of the Framework for Junior Cycle although a number of requirements are yet to be implemented.
- Teaching and learning are of a very high standard, including a number of examples of exemplary practice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Minor adjustments of some policy documents and processes should be undertaken.
- A number of areas associated with the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle should be addressed.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

#### 1.1. School ownership and management:

The board of management is highly effective. The board is appropriately constituted and is aware of its role and responsibilities. The board meets regularly and comprehensive minutes are compiled for board meetings, alongside a very detailed report from the principal. Minutes of board meetings indicate that required reporting with regard to bullying and child protection issues forms an element in each meeting.

There is good communication from the board to other stakeholders, with outcomes from board meetings communicated to staff and parents, where appropriate. It is suggested that these arrangements should be further improved and formalised through the communication of an agreed written report to these two groups following each board meeting. In addition, the board has highlighted the importance it ascribes to the development of student voice by encouraging a number of presentations each year from the student body.

A comprehensive permanent school plan has been developed. This incorporates a wide range of different policies, including mandatory policies. There is a robust and highly effective policy review process in place which involves all partners, as appropriate. Currently, a number of key policy documents are available for access through the staff area of the school website. It is recommended that relevant policy documents should be migrated to the public area of the website, as an additional mode of communication with the school community. The board adopts a formal, structured approach to its oversight role with regard to the implementation of recommendations arising from inspection reports. This is very good practice.

The board has identified a number of key strategic priorities for the development of the school. These are focused on the school building project and the development of teaching and learning. The school building is at a very advanced stage. In the area of teaching and learning, the board has facilitated a very strong emphasis on CPD for teachers which is embedded in the school's culture. In addition, the board is well-informed with regard to the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015).

A parents' association is in place. The parents' association is part of the policy development process in the school. In addition, it has undertaken very significant fundraising activities to support the continued development of the school.

The school places considerable emphasis on the development of leadership roles among the student body. A student council has been established which is fully representative of all year groups. The council is democratically elected and is engaged in a number of different aspects of school life. A *meitheal* team and a prefect system form other elements of student leadership in the school. All of these structures are supportive of the school's longer-term ambition of fully developing the role of

student voice. The selection of feedback as the next focus for school self-evaluation (SSE) has already supported considerable developments in this area.

## 1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

There is a highly effective senior management team in place. The principal and deputy principal work collaboratively, with shared responsibilities. Significant vision on the part of the senior management team is evident in the development of the school infrastructure, alongside a highly effective focus on the development of teaching and learning. High expectations of staff and students are evident throughout the school community and these are supported through strong communication structures between the senior management team, middle management and the care team.

Clear and effective middle management structures are in place. Beyond this, staff have adopted leadership roles across the school community which have real significance in supporting and achieving quality outcomes for students. Of particular note is the prominence attributed to CPD as a key part of maintaining and further developing best practice throughout the school community. The commitment of the board, the senior management team and the teaching staff to collaborative and enduring CPD opportunities incorporates innovative practice and is of an excellent standard. It is having a discernible impact on student outcomes and experiences.

The school offers a wide and varied curriculum, appropriate to the needs of its students. In addition, a proactive approach towards informing parents and the board of management with regard to implications arising from the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) has been adopted. Planning for the implications of this new curriculum has taken place and new subject specifications are being taught in relevant subjects. In addition, the board is considering wider implications for the school's local curriculum and two short courses are planned for the next school year. These arrangements are very good. It is suggested that, over time, careful review and adjustment of current assessment arrangements in junior cycle will be necessary as Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) and Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings are implemented in different subjects.

In the case of English, the oral communication task and the collection of the student's texts which are required by the new specification for junior cycle English have been undertaken. However, English teachers have not undertaken Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings and descriptors have not been awarded to students' Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs). This is not in accordance with the advice in the English specification and as required by circular 0015/2017. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action. In order to ensure that students benefit from the full range of learning experiences as outlined in the English specification, it is recommended that teachers implement all aspects of the English specification. SLAR meetings should be undertaken in order to build a common understanding of the quality of student learning and to quality assure the assessment of students' work as outlined in the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015).

The school pursues an inclusive culture. This is an important, lived element in the school. A clear admissions policy has been developed. The admissions policy currently includes an element of conditionality in the area of special educational needs which does not reflect the lived reality of the school. It is recommended that this element of conditionality should be removed in order to reflect the inclusive practice of the school. School documentation, apart from one minor element, is clear with regard to the voluntary nature of contributions from parents. It is recommended that a minor adjustment should be made in order to further underpin clarity at the point of admission with regard to the nature of the voluntary contribution.

A code of behaviour is in place which is communicated clearly to students. Teachers expressed very strong satisfaction with student behaviour in questionnaires distributed as part of the evaluation and this was consistent with evidence gathered by inspectors as part of classroom observations. In addition, a very effective attendance strategy has been developed and this is working well.

An anti-bullying policy has been adopted by the board of management. The school's highly effective work in this area is strongly reflected in responses provided in student questionnaires administered during the evaluation. To further support this work, it is recommended that the board of management should review the anti-bullying policy on an annual basis and provide written notification to school personnel and the parents' association. The review and the policy should also be published on the school website.

Whole-school approaches to Guidance and to care for students are very well organised. A comprehensive whole-school guidance plan has been developed. A range of roles centred on guidance and care for students form a core element in the school's organisational structure. A highly effective year head and deputy year head structure is supported by class tutors, alongside a school chaplain and the school's guidance counsellors. The school has also engaged in a number of pilot programmes linked to wellbeing and to a range of national agencies in the recent past.

The school operates a very good open subject-choice system, along with a 'taster' programme in first year. TY affords a further opportunity for students to expand their experience of subjects and inform subsequent decisions. Both students and parents expressed satisfaction with these arrangements. Guidance and care is focused on achieving the best personal, educational and vocational outcomes for students.

Junior cycle classes are generally organised in mixed-ability class groups apart from a very small range of subjects. The organisation of subjects in mixed-ability groupings in junior cycle is very good practice. It is important that, where students are placed in class groups based on ability in junior cycle, this system should be kept under very careful review with regard to the impact on student outcomes and experiences.

Support for students with special educational needs is very well-organised. A special educational needs policy is in place, as well as a separate policy linked to the school's Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit. There is a core special educational needs team which includes appropriately qualified team members. Regular meetings of staff in the special educational needs team and staff connected to the ASD unit are organised. A number of teachers have also accessed CPD relevant to the needs of students with additional educational needs. Careful management of transition arrangements from primary school is evident with well thought-out pre-entry and induction processes. A particularly strong feature in the area of additional educational needs is the emphasis placed on including all students as members of the school community, with appropriate support.

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

### 1.3. Management of facilities

Management of facilities is of a very good standard. A comprehensive health and safety statement has been developed. The board and the school community have displayed considerable vision and excellent commitment in advancing the school facilities to the level they expect to achieve by the

beginning of the next school year. The school is currently in the midst of the resulting major building project which has placed considerable and exceptional demands on the management of facilities. In this context, the board, senior management, members of staff and students have worked together to ensure the school continues to run smoothly despite considerable, and unavoidable, disruption of the physical environment.

The school has undertaken numerous actions to develop its use of ICT to support teaching and learning. ICT has been harnessed to support communication within the school community through the development of a very good school website which includes a staff area. Impressive moves towards the development of its next e-learning plan, including the identification of priorities with regard to infrastructure and pedagogy, have been made. Beyond this, initial explorations of the use of students' own electronic devices and various virtual learning environments (VLE) have begun. In this context, it is suggested that the school should move towards identifying a single VLE to support collaborative pedagogy across the school community.

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

### **2.1. The quality of learning and teaching**

Teaching and learning was of a very high standard, including a number of examples of exemplary practice. In the very small number of instances, where advice with regard to improvement was offered, this centred on the structure of questioning, as well as clarity with regard to the learning underway.

Lessons were thoroughly prepared and planning was very good in almost all instances. This included very good preparation of resources. In the very limited number of lessons where planning might have been improved, some consideration with regard to the implementation of particular methodologies and their alignment with the learning underway would be of benefit. A clear and coherent structure was apparent in lessons and pacing was well-managed, with seamless transitions between activities.

Relationships between students and teachers were universally warm, positive, encouraging and affirming, encapsulating the school's 'three rights', articulated as the right to learn, to be happy and to be different. High expectations with regard to student behaviour were evident in lessons. Behaviour of students was very good in all instances.

Learning intentions were shared with students very frequently to provide clarity with regard to the learning to be undertaken during lessons. Best practice was observed in instances where the learning intentions provided an anchor for the lessons and were referenced appropriately during the course of the lesson. In addition, there were examples of learning intentions being used to highlight to students the transferability of skills being explored and as a powerful link to prior learning or students' out-of-school lives.

Very effective use of ICT by teachers was observed. This included the use of visual clips, social media platforms, effective visuals and links to relevant websites. In addition, very good practice in terms of teacher collaboration and sharing of resources through the use of ICT were evident. The challenge for the school now is to develop greater student use of these technologies in lessons, to aid learning. In this context, the school's nascent e-learning plan should be of some import. In the case of teachers' use of ICT, particular opportunities present in the adoption of the visualiser as a key tool across a wider range of subject departments, particularly in support of the explicit teaching of assessment skills.

There was frequent and effective use of pair and group work activities to support student learning. This was especially effective where co-operative learning structures were utilised to maximise possibilities for wait-time and student accountability. On occasion, greater consideration with regard to the underlying rationale for pair work and group work in these areas, to ensure purposeful engagement, should be considered. In a minority of lessons, the possibility of a greater balance between student and teacher talk was suggested.

A particularly impressive feature of the school, in the context of current building works underway, was the high calibre of very many of the classroom learning environments developed by teachers. These included displays of student work, subject-specific displays and, in some instances, scaffolds for students' learning and learning about their learning. In addition, there were examples of peer learning and peer assessment activities during lessons. It was clear that students were willing to risk making mistakes in order to advance their learning in very many lessons. In some rooms, there were examples of the organisation of seating arrangements to support co-operative learning activities. In the context of the impending move to a new school building, opportunities to expand such arrangements might profitably be explored.

The school has identified the area of feedback and assessment for learning as a focus for self-evaluation over the next number of years. In this context, further expansion of the current team-teaching initiative in the school could be considered, along with approaches towards the teaching of assessment skills to students. This would build on very good work which has been undertaken in the context of student-teacher feedback regarding senior cycle mock examinations. In addition, there are significant opportunities for the sharing of good practice across subject departments, particularly in the context of the school's excellent focus on cross-curricular CPD events and inputs which are already in existence.

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

#### **3.1. Management**

The school consistently engages with recommendations from inspection reports and there has been clear progress in the implementation of recommendations. In the case of PE, where there have been issues with regard to the timetabling of the subject for some year groups, school management stated that these issues will be addressed in the next school year.

#### **3.2. Learning and teaching**

Recommendations with regard to learning and teaching have been systematically addressed at whole-school level and at departmental level in a wide range of subjects. A very positive feature of the work of the school in addressing recommendations arising from inspections is the proactive involvement of the board of management and the professional engagement of the teaching body in engaging with the process of improvement. There is very good implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.

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

The school has adopted a highly professional, research-based approach to School Self-Evaluation (SSE). Over time, the self-evaluation process has evolved and now fully incorporates the effective use



of baseline data, the development of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-linked (SMART) targets, and the identification of appropriate actions which are linked to targets identified. A range of qualitative and quantitative data-gathering tools is used to inform the SSE process.

A biannual newsletter is published for the school community and this has been utilised as a means of communicating aspects of the SSE process. This is very good practice. Beyond this, a number of other avenues have been adopted to inform parents of the focus of SSE and how they can help. As a means of adding to the already very good, communications processes in place, it is recommended that a summary of the school self-evaluation report and school improvement plan should now be included on the school website.

The school self-evaluation process has begun to make a discernible and positive impact on student outcomes and experiences, adding to the school's already very high, capacity for self-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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;