

**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 Wolstan's Community School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ballymakeely Clane Rd Celbridge Co Kildare
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91505T

**Date of Evaluation: 23-11-2016**



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

**INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	21 – 23 November 2016
<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**

St. Wolstan’s Community School, is an all-girls post-primary school, situated on the outskirts of Celbridge. It operates under the trusteeship of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, the Le Chéile Schools Trust and Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board.

The school has a current enrolment of 773 girls and offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**

- The board of management is highly committed to the school and provides good management and ongoing support to the principal and deputy principal.
- Senior management has clearly defined roles and provides very effective management for the school.
- The distribution of middle management roles and responsibilities is mostly very good.
- Staff is motivated, highly committed and has leadership opportunities in the school, however, the collective voice of staff is not always gathered to progress school improvement and development.
- There is very good whole-school care for students.
- The overall quality of learning and teaching was good with notable instances of very good and excellent practice and scope for development was identified in a small number of lessons.
- Teachers have not conducted Classroom Based Assessment in English in accordance with the advice in the Specification for Junior Cycle English (2015) as required by Circular 0024/2016. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The board of management should instigate the development of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound (SMART) targets to progress the key priorities for school improvement, and request an annual report from post-holders that highlights achievements and identifies areas for further development.
- Staff committees should be established to offer school management suggestions on key decisions for school improvement and curricular development, this should also allow for the collective views of all staff in key whole-school issues to be gathered.

- Areas for development identified in teaching and learning included greater use of more active methods, the use of differentiation to support all learners and the use of the school's analysed baseline data, to further inform classroom practice and in the development of subject department plans.
- School management and staff should revisit the rationale for the school self-evaluation (SSE) process to ensure that it is used as a mechanism through which this school's needs for improvement can be realised.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

#### **1.1. School ownership and management**

Overall the board provides good management for the school. The board is appropriately constituted and meets regularly. Board members have a wide range of knowledge and relevant expertise in the area of education and provide ongoing support to senior management. Training opportunities have been afforded to all board members and most have availed of such events.

Minutes of board meetings follow a common structure ensuring that members of the board are kept very well informed. While teaching and learning are discussed at board meetings, more regular updates regarding teaching and learning should be included on the board's agenda. The board should oversee the review of attainment which could be used to inform the ongoing development of the school's curriculum.

An agreed report is prepared following each board meeting for the school staff and a verbal report is presented to the parents' association. A structured end-of-year report is presented to the trustees, outlining overall achievements and developments undertaken by the school during the year. This is very good practice. An annual meeting with the student council and the board takes place.

A school plan has been prepared and although it is very informative, it should be updated to include a developmental section. This would ensure that current key priorities as identified by the board, including infrastructural development, increasing engagement among senior cycle students and improved information and communications technology (ICT) facilities to support teaching and learning, can be aligned with targets that are SMART. This would allow the board to monitor progress for all priorities.

The board plays an active role in policy development and review. Mandatory policies are in place with good practices established to allow all partners to be involved in the development of school policies. Some policies are developed based on a specific need that arises rather than in a more systematic manner. It is recommended that a framework document be developed to support the board in the systematic and cyclical review of policies.

Senior management, comprising the principal and deputy principal, is a united and conscientious team and the overall management of the school is very effective. Both take responsibility for specific roles and operate as a strong partnership. Senior management is highly committed to the school, to promoting high expectations of their staff and students and to excellence in teaching and learning.

Regular attendance at continuing professional development (CPD) events ensures that senior management is very well informed and up-to-date on national policy and practices. Questionnaires administered to teaching staff, parents and students as part of the evaluation indicate that the school is very well run.

Senior management has a clear vision for the school. Consultation and collaboration processes should be undertaken to ensure that it becomes a shared vision. The SSE processes could be usefully implemented to identify the necessary steps needed to progress and achieve this.

The middle management team, comprising seven assistant principals (APs) and nine special duties posts, undertake their responsibilities effectively. Duties associated with the post are mostly in line with Circular Letter 29/02. The post structure was reviewed in 2013 and offers devolved leadership roles to post holders. Effective practice was noted where the skills set of individuals are matched with the specific post. However, to ensure that the changing needs of the school are being met, it is recommended that ongoing review of the post structure takes place. One area that should be considered is curriculum development. Each post-holder should prepare an annual written report for the board of management, highlighting achievements while identifying areas for further development.

An active and supportive parents association is in place. Their contribution to the school is significant and there is a strong willingness to contribute and support the school through their involvement and assistance in for example, school events and policy development.

#### 1.2. Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Very good devolved leadership opportunities are available to staff through the school's involvement in a range of initiatives such as Droichead, Le Chéile Schools Trust training and more recently in the Assessment of Transversal Skills 2020. Participation in such initiatives is initially gathered through expressions of interest by staff following which the principal nominates a staff member to represent the school staff.

Staff members are highly committed to the school and demonstrates high expectations for student behaviour and attainment. There are very good opportunities for staff to develop their leadership roles outside of the post structure. CPD opportunities are facilitated for all staff and some financial support is provided by the board of management to staff participating in additional studies. Staff is encouraged to utilise information garnered at CPD events, the recent introduction of student tracking system by the guidance department is one such example.

Internal communication is maintained through the school's emailing system and notices in the staffroom. A very informative website has been developed and is regularly updated to provide information and to celebrate student success. In addition, social media, and newsletters are used effectively to communicate with the wider school community.

Regular meetings with senior management and APs also take place and generally focus on whole-staff issues. There is an expectation that APs will bring necessary information to the wider staff and gather whole-staff responses. While this practice may be helpful for some issues, it is recommended that staff meetings be used to gather the collective views of all staff in key issues such as whole-school curriculum review, timetabling and school self-evaluation.

Minutes of staff meetings reveal that they are used to update staff, with little evidence of issues being discussed and actions being agreed. While staff members have opportunities to input to staff meeting agendas, responses to questionnaires distributed during the evaluation were less positive regarding their views being valued in the decision-making process in the school. Senior management should

consider developing staff committees to progress school priorities and initiatives to ensure that the collective voice of staff is heard and valued.

A significant range of subjects is provided for in the school's curriculum. In response to a recommendation arising from a previous inspection management has increased the availability of places in TY, which is very welcome. Although offered as a senior cycle option in the school, currently no student is following the LCVP. It is recommended that the school work towards promoting this programme among all students by highlighting the benefits of participating in the LCVP.

The current school's timetable provides twenty-eight hours forty minutes tuition, however, the staggered return and the graduation of TY students prior to the summer holidays should be reviewed in line with Circular Letter M1/00 with particular reference to the length of the school year for TY students.

Overall there is very good timetabling arrangements for the delivery of the school's curriculum. This includes very good distribution of lessons throughout the school week, a generous allocation of time to the core subjects of Irish, English and Mathematics. Banding of some subjects facilitating students to access a level commensurate with their ability. However, the allocation of a single period per week of Physical Education (PE) is unsatisfactory as it does not allow for any in-depth learning and should be reviewed.

Teachers are deployed in line with their subject specialisms. The practice of teachers having the opportunity to share in the teaching of different programmes, subjects and levels is very good as it promotes capacity building among teachers.

Staff demonstrates a willingness to volunteer as class tutors and to support a significant range of extra and co-curricular activities including a wide range of sports, arts and charity events in addition to competitions such as SciFest and debating. Staffs' commitment to supporting school management and their students is acknowledged and commended. In addition to participation in extra-curricular and co-curricular events, students have significant leadership opportunities through the student council and in the duties they undertake as prefects.

A comprehensive admissions policy is in place and is reviewed annually by the board of management. The policy reflects the inclusive nature of the school and provides clear expectations for prospective and current students.

The attendance of students in the school is monitored on a daily basis. Good attendance was noted for students up to junior cycle with poor attendance noted particularly for some senior cycle students. This same issue was raised in a previous whole-school evaluation report (2006). Management should further investigate the issues surrounding poor attendance for certain students and arising from their findings devise a statement of Strategy for School Attendance in line with Section 22 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Students' behaviour during the evaluation was exemplary. Although recently ratified, the language used in the school's code of behaviour is austere and should be reviewed to reflect the practice in the school. A clear ladder of referral is in place to address issues of indiscipline should the need arise.

The guidance service works effectively to support students in their educational, vocational and personal development. Timetabling arrangements for guidance and the quality of care provided to students are very good. The school's care team, comprising senior management, the guidance team, the school chaplain and when applicable, the special education needs (SEN) co-ordinator and year head, meets fortnightly and on a more regular basis if necessary. Personal counselling is offered

through the school's in-school support team with additional counselling accessed from external agencies.

A small core team of five teachers provides the majority of the support to students with additional educational needs, two of whom have qualifications in SEN. Very good information is provided to teachers regarding students' learning needs and individual education plans for specific students have been developed. The current register should be updated to include how and with whom students in receipt of SEN hours are accessing these supports.

The current models of provision include in-class support or small class withdrawal mostly for those with an exemption in Irish. The creation in first year upon entry to the school of a streamed class grouping for Mathematics should be reviewed as such an early determination of students' perceived ability may impact on their progress. It is also recommended that the school management consider the introduction of team teaching as a model of in-class support, with relevant upskilling accessed in advance of its introduction.

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

The overall maintenance and upkeep of the school is of a high standard. The school has been active in environment and health awareness issues and has received five Green School Flags and the Amber Flag for their work.

School corridors are used to display subject specific notices, student work and to highlight their achievements and successes.

Significant investment by the board has greatly enhanced the ICT facilities in the school as a tool to support teaching and learning and to enable collaborative approaches to the sharing of documentation. Current investment by the board involves significant upgrading of the school's hockey facilities.

## 2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

### 2.1. The quality of learning and teaching

The overall quality of learning and teaching in the lessons observed during the evaluation was good with notable instances of very good and excellent practice. In a small number of lessons there was scope for development.

In general, teacher preparation for lessons was very good and high-quality resources, including ICT were available to enhance learning for students. Learning outcomes were shared at the outset of all lessons either verbally or written on the board. Best practice was noted where the learning intention was clear to both teacher and students, and was revisited throughout the lesson and reviewed at the end.

Subject department planning is facilitated and various approaches to the development of schemes of work were noted in the review of subject plans. Best practice in subject plans was evident where the

learning intentions were linked to the teaching methodology. This practice should be shared among all subject departments. Scope for improvement was noted in subject plans where the methodologies for differentiation were listed rather than linking them to a class group or learning intention and where the schedule for delivery was based on textbook rather than the syllabus.

Overall, academic attainment in state examinations is very good. Students are encouraged to participate at the highest level in their examinations. Teachers review student attainment in the context of subject department planning, however, greater use of this analysis should be used to inform future subject planning. The recent introduction of the tracking system should also be utilised on a whole-school basis to inform staff about the ability of their students and how the curriculum can be delivered to suit their learning style and reach their potential.

A good range of teaching approaches was noted during the evaluation. Demonstrations were used effectively in many lessons. Pair work and group work were seen frequently which is good practice, and could be further developed through a more purposeful and well-structured approach.

In lessons that were student centred there was an appropriate balance between teacher input and student activity. This was most effective where students actively participated in well-paced lessons, and where they took ownership of their learning. Where a teacher-led approach or a lecture style approach predominated this limited inputs from students. In such instances, a more active learning approach is to be encouraged to support and promote life-long learning skills.

The use of subject-specific language in lessons was generally good and was noted where student input was facilitated by teachers. Where students had opportunities to speak it was noted that their use of subject specific language was also of a very high quality. This is to be encouraged and developed.

Classroom management was very good and interactions between students and teachers were respectful and positive. Expectations of students were very high and student engagement in learning activities was very good overall. In a few lessons there were instances where students were passive in their learning. Greater student autonomy should be established through further development of assessment for learning activities (AfL), such as think-pair-share.

An effective and print-rich learning environment is provided by teachers in the school and included displays of student work and commercially produced materials. All rooms were well-equipped with high-quality materials and resources. ICT was used effectively and in some instances creatively. Some very good examples of AfL classroom layouts were seen and this could be used throughout the school.

Questioning of students was good overall. Targeted questions were used in many lessons and were generally well-distributed. Some degree of differentiation was noted in the questioning, however more higher-order questions would create further challenge, particularly for more able students.

Some instances of excellent practice were noted in lessons where students asked their teachers challenging and thought-provoking questions, and where the teacher facilitated deep discussion of the topic through a flexible approach to achieve the learning intention. In some instances students' questions could be further exploited to promote student voice.

Student progress is assessed regularly through homework, class tests and some self and peer-assessment. Some verbal formative feedback was observed in lessons and students were affirmed for their contributions. Teachers circulated in lessons and responded to students' individual needs.

Written work is monitored and corrected regularly, with some affirmative comments and a few examples of written formative feedback. The provision of regular written formative feedback on



students' work, with clear and constructive directions for improvement is recommended to increase student engagement and achievement in their learning.

Teachers have not conducted Classroom Based Assessment in English in accordance with the advice in the Specification for Junior Cycle English (2015) as required by Circular 0024/2016. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action.

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

#### **3.1. Management**

Overall, some good progress has been made with recommendations arising from previous inspection and the 2006 whole-school evaluation reports. Further progress is still needed in the development of the school plan, in the framework for policy development and in the timetabling of PE.

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

Very good progress was noted in the use of the target language by teachers in language based lessons. The inclusion of written formative feedback and greater use of active methodologies in lessons were identified as areas requiring further development.

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

There is good capacity within the school to embrace improvement through the SSE process. Questionnaires have been distributed to gather necessary information from staff, students and parents. While some findings have been identified and discussed there has been no in-depth analysis leading to the identification of priorities.

The school focused on themes such as literacy and numeracy and collaborative learning strategies, all of which are in line with national policy. To build on this, school management and staff should revisit the rationale for the SSE process to ensure that it is used as a mechanism through which this school's priorities for improvement can be realised.

# 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 St. Wolstan's Community School wishes to acknowledge receipt of the MLL inspector's report. The MLL affirmed many of the good practices in existence in the school, in particular the high standards of management and leadership and teaching and learning.

The board wishes to congratulate and thank the whole school community for its contribution to this outcome.

#### **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 Board of Management is fully committed to the implementation of the recommendations and suggestions in this report, all of which will be addressed over the coming year.

## 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;