An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

REPORT

Killina Presentation Secondary School
Rahan, County Offaly
Roll number: 65630B

Date of inspection: 9 March 2016

AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS
INSPECTORATE

Whole-School Evaluation
Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in March 2016 in Killina Presentation Secondary School. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with the school's board of management, in-school management, and groups of teachers, parents and students. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and responses to questionnaires and examined other data in relation to the operation of the school. As part of the evaluation, a range of lessons across a number of subject areas was inspected. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Introduction
Killina Presentation Secondary School is a co-educational, voluntary school under the Trusteeship of Catholic Education, An Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). Located in a rural setting the school has a long tradition with the community and was founded in 1817 by the Presentation order and gained full secondary status in 1977.

The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) to its 439 students. It is a highly inclusive school and was the first school in the area to establish a resource centre catering for students with moderate general learning disabilities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings
- The board of management provides effective leadership and management for continued school improvement.
- The principal and deputy principal are an effective senior management team which is committed to school development, progressing and implementing school priorities.
- Devolved leadership opportunities are available to staff through the post structure and also through the school's participation in a variety of programmes related to the development of teaching and learning.
- Teaching staff demonstrate a high level of care for their students and volunteer to support an extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good.
- Many of the recommendations from previous subject inspection reports have yet to be fully implemented by subject departments and school management.

Recommendations for Further Development
- The middle management structure within the school should be reviewed further to support the ongoing development needs of the school.
- A significant review and reform of the overall special education needs (SEN) provision in the mainstream setting of the school should be undertaken by school management in conjunction with the SEN department.

- Teachers should use the available data from student ability testing and student attainment in examinations to develop action plans to improve student attainment and to guide subject department planning.
- A whole-school approach to improving student participation in their learning while promoting learning for understanding is required.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The board of management is properly constituted and is very committed to the ongoing development of the school. Members of the board possess a wide range of knowledge and relevant expertise in the area of education which is an invaluable resource for the school. The board is in the second year of a three-year cycle and a few members have served on previous boards.

Members of the board have availed of training provided by CEIST. The board meets regularly and additional meetings are convened when necessary. Minutes of meetings are detailed and a structured principal's report ensures that members of the board are kept very well informed about all aspects of school life and indeed the challenges that the school faces. In addition, an end of term review was conducted by the outgoing board identifying the strengths and areas for priority for the incoming board.

Most recently, the board has sought further detailed analysis and development plans from subject departments about student attainment in the certificate examinations. This is very good practice.

A comprehensive school plan for the period 2013 to 2018 has been developed and includes a permanent section, the school policies and the identification of areas for school improvement. Areas correctly identified by the board in this document include: ongoing infrastructure developments, maintaining school enrolment, and ensuring that school development planning enhances teaching and learning.

The board plays an active role in policy development and review, with the vast majority of mandatory policies in place, with many in need of updating. An overarching document has been developed identifying policies for drafting and review, for the periods 2013 through to 2018. This is very good practice and should support the board in the systematic and cyclical review of policies. However, the board should also prioritise some policies that require annual review namely, the anti-bullying, the health and safety and mandatory policies such as a critical incident policy and a substance abuse policy. During policy development the student voice should be included more often as data from student questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicates that students do not agree that they have a say in how things are done in the school.

The board prepares an agreed report for the school staff and parents association at the end of each board meeting. An annual report, various school policies and school publications are made available to the wider community via the school's website. Questionnaires administered to teaching staff, parents and students as part of the evaluation demonstrate that all agree that the school is very well run.

Senior management, comprising the principal and deputy principal, is a very effective, united and conscientious team. Both take responsibility for specific roles and operate as a strong partnership to the ongoing development of the school. Senior management has a visible presence in the school and each member undertakes teaching duties providing them with an invaluable link with the students within the school.

Senior management demonstrates a strong commitment to school improvement and is implementing a significant change agenda in the school including; improvement in teaching and learning, general school organisation, devolution of leadership and promotion of a positive and open working relationship. Senior management has high expectations of staff and students and has introduced a range of support structures to progress the school priorities.

Very good communication between senior management is maintained through formal daily meetings and via informal meetings. Commendably, the principal and deputy principal undertake a review and reflection of their work done throughout the school year and use these findings to prioritise developments for the next academic year.

Leadership roles are distributed at middle management level and offer staff an opportunity to support the effective management of the school through a range of duties in line with Circular Letter 29/02. An internal review of the post of responsibilities was undertaken in recent years and provided greater clarity of the roles and responsibilities assigned to each of the middle management posts. There is however, still further scope for the post structure to be developed and to reflect the ongoing and changing needs of the school.

Given the diverse range of duties within the post structure there were some inconsistencies noted in how similar post-holders undertake some of their post duties. The principal should conduct an annual review with all post-holders to further clarify the specific duties attached to each post of responsibility. This should allow for the ongoing and changing needs of the school to be identified and provide opportunities to further develop the role of middle management.

The overall effective management of the school is supported by teachers who volunteer as class tutors, and by their willingness to participate in and lead various school committees. Teachers are acknowledged and commended for their work to support school management.

Good communication with the school and the wider community is maintained in a range of ways including a daily staff newsletter prepared by the principal, weekly in-school management meetings, regular staff meetings and the school's website. Minutes of staff meetings reveal that an ambitious agenda is frequently set. While staff is consulted on school development some concern was expressed regarding the time available to discuss school issues and again via staff questionnaires regarding the views of teachers being valued in the decision-making process in the school. This is an area that could usefully be explored further.

The parents' association is consulted on all aspects of school activities and is committed to supporting the school on an ongoing basis. Regular meetings of the association take place allowing for meaningful contributions to school development. The parents' association provides an annual report which is included within the whole-school annual report and published on the school's website.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Very good devolved leadership opportunities are available to staff members through the school's participation in programmes related to the development of teaching and learning, such as *TL21*, *Droichead* and by presenting to colleagues at staff meetings. Continuing professional development is facilitated by management and some teachers have participated in upskilling programmes to develop capacity in subject departments.

A broad curriculum and a significant range of subjects are offered in the school. Very good efforts are made to support the subject choice for students and a range of information events and inputs is provided by the school's guidance services. Very good supports are in place as students transition into the school including the taster day offered to fifth-class primary students prior to entry.

A broad range of core subjects in addition to modular programmes is offered in the well - organised TY programme. The TY programme is reviewed and updated regularly, taking the views of teachers, students and parents into consideration. This is good practice.

The current school's timetable does not allow for maximising the deployment of teachers nor does it optimise the learning opportunities for students. Notwithstanding the fact that the time allocated to most subjects is very good, the allocation of a two single periods of Physical Education is unsatisfactory. This distribution does not allow for any in-depth learning and should be reviewed to facilitate double periods. The timetabling of the LCVP programme requires review, as the provision of study periods for non-LCVP students during link module lessons does not constitute instruction time. In line with Circular Letter M29/95 this should be discontinued. Furthermore, the provision of a modern language module at lunchtime for some LCVP students to fulfil the programme requirements may militate against greater participation in the programme.

In the context of timetabling shortcomings noted above it is recommended that the school's board of studies committee be reconvened to offer suggestions for key timetabling decisions.

Teachers regularly volunteer to support an excellent range of co-curricular, extra-curricular and cross-curricular opportunities. These include sports, music, participation in events such as SciFest and more recently in the centenary celebrations of the 1916 Easter rising. Very good student leadership opportunities are promoted through the school's peer-mentoring programme, via the student council and more recently through the involvement of students in a Zambian Immersion programme.

The school has two admissions policies, one for the mainstream school and a second for the resource unit. Both policies are in need of review and updating to reflect current practice. Such a review should provide clarity surrounding areas including; the capping of numbers and the implementation dates of the policies and admissions to all year groups.

Students' behaviour during lesson observations and in the school environs during the evaluation was mostly exemplary. Aspects of the code of behaviour are currently being updated but a more robust review is recommended so that the various practices such as aspects of the classroom disciplinary procedures and procedures that have recently been introduced are included in a revised policy. The responses of students, parents and teachers to the evaluation questionnaires should be used to inform the review process.

Significant resources are available to support students with SEN. The school provides support through a dedicated resource centre and in the mainstream school setting. Three staff members have post-graduate qualifications in SEN, two of whom are deployed in the resource centre. Two teachers are deployed to co-ordinate SEN in the school, one for mainstream and one for the resource centre. The overall organisation, management and co-ordination of the school's resource unit are excellent. The two dedicated class groups are operating at full capacity with eight students in each group.

Resources allocated for specific students in the mainstream school should be reviewed to ensure that intended recipients' specific needs are being catered for through the current provision. A very large team of teachers is deployed to provide additional support to

mainstream students. It is therefore recommended that a significant review and restructuring of mainstream SEN support be undertaken by management and the SEN department. This should allow for the identification of a core team of teachers each of whom would have greater involvement in the provision of the SEN support. A student register that details how and by whom support is being provided to students in receipt of such support should be developed.

A significant care system is in place to support students. A class tutor system is in place which assists the work of the year heads. In addition a weekly in-school meeting takes place with senior management, the year heads and the school's guidance counsellor. Counselling is offered in the school and additional supports are accessed from outside agencies including JIGSAW and National Educational Psychological Service.

Subject department planning documentation reviewed has benefited from the recent inputs by senior management. Where very good subject planning documentation was observed this included clear links with intended learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and assessment practices. Scope for improvement was noted in many subject plans and programme plans. It is therefore recommended that the very good practice as noted should be shared among all subject departments.

A review of student attainment in certificate examinations indicates that there have been some recent improvements. There are, however, variations in uptake of levels depending on the subject. The recent introduction of a systematic review of student attainment by subject departments should be further progressed. It is recommended that the data available from such analysis should be used to develop action plans that are specific, measurable, attainable, and realistic and time bound (SMART) to ensure appropriate subject department targets are developed and realised. The recent introduction of tracking templates in student diaries has yet to be fully realised and should in time allow students to be more involved in the monitoring and tracking of their progress. A whole-school approach to academic tracking and monitoring of students' attainment from an early stage should become more common practice.

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 of the school is excellent. Since 1998, the school has had a number of extensions to the original buildings and further plans are being prepared for additional accommodation to support teaching and learning. Classrooms are well equipped and many had a range of both student developed and commercially sourced materials on display. Investment has taken place to increase the availability of ICT facilities in the school.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

In most of the twenty-two lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning observed was good or very good. However, in a small but significant number of lessons scope for improvement was noted.

Attendance was observed to be very good during the evaluation period with all teachers taking time to record student attendance in lessons.

In lessons where best practice was observed, teachers had high expectations; students were adequately challenged and were active in their work, with differentiation and criteria for success such as exemplars used to optimise engagement and the confidence of the learner.

In some lessons learning intentions were clearly established and an appropriate range of student-centred approaches was used to achieve the intentions. In such lessons, teachers took time to review the success or other of the intentions thereby providing a good overall structure and pace to the lesson. It is therefore recommended that teachers ensure that the true meaning of the learning intentions is clearly understood and communicated to students for the lesson or series of lessons. The use of pre-printed learning intentions headings displayed in classrooms should be utilised.

A small range of mostly effective teaching methodologies was employed in many of the lessons observed. On occasions, however, there was an over reliance on teacher-led instruction which resulted in some students becoming passive for a period of time.

In some lessons group work was observed. Effective group work observed was characterised by; carefully planned activities, clear instructions from the teacher; clearly defined roles and responsibilities for students and an identified timeframe for the completion of the assigned task. As such practices were only evident in a small number of lessons it is recommended that cooperative learning be a prioritised area for whole-staff development.

Question and answer sessions were used in most lessons to good effect and a good balance was maintained between global and directed questioning allowing for some very good opportunities for the students' voice to be heard. Some very good use was made of more challenging questioning strategies to probe and deepen students' understanding of learning. However, this practice was limited to just a few lessons. In these lessons interactions with students and their teachers led to students demonstrating a depth of knowledge and understanding of the topic. In lessons where very good learning took place students were given opportunities to reflect on the question and to report on their learning. Such practices should be extended across all lessons.

Less effective was the use of lower-order questions of the whole class, which were often answered by the same students. In some lessons this resulted in some missed opportunities to build on students' curiosity. It is recommended that teachers ask a range of questions which responds to the differentiated needs of the student cohort and that directed questions are used more often.

Students' engagement in active learning is an area for significant development in the school. Student autonomy in their learning should be increased through the use of a range of more student-centred activities which should lead to maximising student learning.

Resources used in most lessons included teacher-developed worksheets, textbooks, the data projector and mini whiteboards. The effectiveness of these resources varied and on occasion there was an over-reliance on the textbook. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in most lessons was effective to support student learning. In some lessons, ICT was used to project images to support learning and facilitate class discussion on the topic rather than solely as a tool to present information. It is recommended that teachers ensure that the most appropriate resources are identified that will enhance the teaching and learning in the subject.

A review of students' copy books indicated that homework is regularly assigned and monitored which is good practice. While teachers provided oral feedback to students in the course of lessons, there is a need for all teachers to include more formative written feedback to their students.

The learning environment was enhanced in many classrooms with student projects and some commercially sourced materials. In addition the school's corridors are used to display recent successes in all aspects of school life and to highlight successes achieved by students in events. The classroom layout in most rooms was traditional where students were seated in rows. All teachers should reconfigure their classrooms to support and promote cooperative learning.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

Some recommendations remain outstanding from previous inspections include particularly those relating to mainstream SEN and the timetabling of PE have been reiterated in this report.

3.2 Learning and teaching

Recommendations pertaining to learning and teaching made in previous inspection reports, such as greater use of ICT, more active methodologies and the use of written formative feedback, have yet to be fully achieved and have been identified again as the main recommendations in this report.

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

The school has progressed with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. The key elements of SSE have been followed including; the identification of a core team and a link teacher, collecting and collating of data, prioritising areas for improvement; preparation of improvement plans and the implementation phases are underway. To-date the school has identified study skills, literacy and is currently completing the analysis of data for numeracy as priority themes. Whole-staff presentations are made to keep staff informed about the process.

There is evidence that there is a capacity among the board of management, senior management, teaching staff, parents and students of a willingness to embrace change and improvement through self-evaluation.

Published September 2016

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1   Observations on the content of the inspection report

The School welcomes the Report of the Inspectorate which was issued recently. The Report follows the inspection of the management, leadership and learning in the school.

The Board of Management welcomes the acknowledgement of the very positive relationships which exist in the school between students, staff, management, parents, Board of Management and trustees. The Report recognises the pastoral leadership and vision of school management, the emphasis on student care, the focus on positive behaviour and the atmosphere of mutual respect which pervades the school.

The report acknowledges the dedication and hard work of the staff and the quality of teaching and learning across the school. It commends the excellent provision of extracurricular activities. The report also acknowledges the school's inclusivity and its broad and balanced curriculum.

The Board views the report as an important roadmap in assisting the school set out its priorities for its future development. The Board is acutely aware of the role of this school in the community and in the surrounding townlands and villages from which it draws its student cohort. The school will continue to renew its mission and relevancy in the Ireland of the 21st Century.

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

With a view to addressing the recommendations raised in the report the Board, Senior Management team and staff have initiated the following actions and will continue to pursue improvement into the future.

A review of the middle management structure has been initiated by the Board and an external facilitator has been engaged to conduct this review, this will be completed in the current school year.

A review and reform of the SEN department has been undertaken. The number of teachers involved in the provision of SEN education has been significantly reduced. A core team has been identified and our existing SEN teacher is joined by a newly recruited SEN qualified teacher and existing staff member who is currently undertaking the SEN postgraduate course. We have engaged with the supports of the Special education support service and the professional development service for teachers in this regard.

Subject and school planning documentation has been updated and amended to include SMART targets and improved structures which place a focus in school and subject planning documentation on improving optimizing students attainments.

The timetable was already under review at the time of the inspection and this is due for completion in October 2016. The new timetable, which will be introduced in Sept 2017 will ensure that optimal timetabling will take place and will not include study periods for senior students. Double periods for Physical Education have been provided in the current school timetable in line with the recommendations.

We will continue to progress active learning methodologies which see students play a more active part in their learning.