

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Coláiste Phádraig, C.B.S.
Lucan, County Dublin
Roll number: 60264A**

Date of inspection: 14 January 2015



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

Whole-School Evaluation

Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in January 2015 in Coláiste Phádraig C.B.S., Lucan. 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 of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Introduction

Coláiste Phádraig, Lucan was founded by the Irish Christian Brothers and is an all-boys post-primary school in West Dublin, under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). In addition to the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes the school offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school's mission statement commits to a holistic education and realisation of students' full potential in an atmosphere of care and mutual respect. At the time of the evaluation 725 students were enrolled.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- The board of management is experienced and committed and board members bring a variety of expertise to their work. The board has recently developed an action plan that includes a set of priorities and timeframes for achieving identified targets.
- Key school policies such as the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying policy have been reviewed recently by school management and staff in consultation with the remainder of the school community.
- The newly appointed principal has made an excellent start and provides very effective leadership in the management of change.
- Six assistant principals play a valuable role; they are ably supported by teachers, tutors and special duties teachers.
- The school management has recently begun a review of the post structure and this needs to be progressed to meet current and future needs of the school.
- There is a significant involvement by staff and students in extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
- The school is welcoming of students with additional and special educational needs and caters well for a number of students on the autistic spectrum.
- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching is good to very good with some examples of excellent practice evident in a number of lessons.
- Homework was regularly given in many, but not all subjects. The small amount of written homework given in some subjects was a cause for concern.
- The senior management team has shown the vision and capability to achieve continuous improvement.

Recommendations for Further Development

- In order to set appropriate targets to increase uptake at higher level in the certificate examinations and to gain a more comprehensive perspective on students' overall achievement in the school, the data from student entrance assessments and from standardised tests should be added to students' profiles as part of a comprehensive tracking system.
- Significant issues raised in the responses to the student and parent questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation should be explored and addressed by senior management and staff where appropriate.
- The school should adhere to the requirements of circular M29/95 and provide 28 hours tuition time for all students.
- The provision for students with special education needs should be reviewed to ensure that the individual needs of all students are met in a more comprehensive and co-ordinated manner and that all students benefit appropriately from the resources allocated for them.
- The assessment for learning (AfL) principles associated with the provision of formative feedback to students should be adopted in all subjects, and teachers should provide regular written comments towards improvement in student copybook work.
- A working group should be established to support improvements in teaching and learning, active methodologies, AfL strategies and the sharing of good practice through peer collaborative review.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

An experienced, committed and appropriately constituted board of management is in place. Members bring a variety of expertise to the board. The board has recently developed an action plan that includes a set of priorities and timeframes for achieving identified targets, in relation to areas for development such as Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), school security and management of student numbers. All mandatory policies are in place. School management has comprehensively reviewed key policies including the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying policy. This had been done in consultation with the school community. The board is supportive of continuous professional development for staff, and provides a bursary for teachers willing to engage in further studies.

The principal and deputy principal are very dedicated and committed. They work very well as a team and are good role models for both staff and students. The newly appointed principal has made an excellent start in his first term in this school. He is very able, proactive and diligent and has a wealth of relevant experience. He has provided very effective leadership in the management of change, in school self-evaluation and in policy development. He is very supportive of staff and students and is open to the views of staff, students and parents. The deputy principal plays a key role in the day-to-day management of the school; he maintains a high profile around the school, and is supportive of staff and students on daily basis.

The six assistant principals are experienced and play a valuable role. They contribute significantly to the area of discipline, and to the pastoral care of students. The assistant principals are ably supported by tutors and class teachers. Special duties teachers carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner. The school has recently begun a review of the post structures. Recent and impending retirements provide both a stimulus and an opportunity for this review. In the revision of post-holder duties there is a need to focus

more on leadership for learning and strategic planning for improvement. Volunteerism also needs to continue to be encouraged at all levels in order to ensure the provision of opportunities for teachers who wish to develop their leadership skills. It is heartening to note that ERST is currently supporting a number of teachers in leadership training.

The senior management team and staff have begun to analyse results and to set targets of student achievement in the certificate examinations. Higher-level uptake in the certificate examinations in a number of subjects is strong. However, in several subjects there is scope for an increase in the numbers of students taking higher-level in Junior and Leaving Certificate. In order to set appropriate targets to increase the uptake at higher level and to gain a more comprehensive perspective on students' achievement, the data from the primary schools, from student entrance assessments, and from standardised tests should be added to this analysis. These data could form the baseline for a comprehensive tracking system of student attainment.

A school self-evaluation report and school improvement plan (SIP) has been developed. These documents have to date focused, in particular, on achievement and progress in literacy for first-year students. The targeted plan makes excellent use of data from the primary schools and other data gathered from first years.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

A very good pastoral care team is in place. The school is rightly proud of its care policies and practices and its respect for students and staff. The strong guidance team is an integral part of the pastoral care system. Discipline procedures are fair and reasonable. Efforts are currently being made to reduce the number of student suspensions.

The parent and student questionnaires administered as part of this whole-school evaluation raise significant issues in relation to student management, lack of student voice, teaching and learning, the use of ICT in lessons and homework. These matters need to be further explored by senior management and staff and addressed where appropriate.

There is an active students' council and an effective *Gluais* mentoring programme which greatly assists first-year students to settle into the school. *Gluais* also provides valuable leadership opportunities for students. Prefects play a valuable role in school life. There is a committed parents' council that plays an active role in fundraising and policy development. The principal and deputy principal attend parents' council meetings. Funds raised by parents support teaching, learning and extra-curricular activities.

A number of study periods is provided for fifth-year and sixth-year students, with additional class periods allocated to study for students who do not avail of the LCVP or games options. The resulting loss of tuition time means that some students are receiving less than twenty-eight hours instruction per week. It is recommended that all timetabled hours be used for subject provision, and that students be provided with 28 hours tuition in accordance with circular M29/95.

Students are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum. The vibrant and varied TY programme is attractive to students, and there is a demand to increase the current provision of two to three classes for TY. The fact that the school offers a well-planned LCA programme for a small cohort of students is commendable.

With regard to the LCVP very useful, detailed written plans for teaching the Link Modules curriculum have been prepared. This programme has been of great benefit to students and outcomes have been very positive. The LCVP does not have a sufficiently high profile

among teachers not involved with the programme, and this restricts comprehensive cross-curricular work. It is recommended that awareness and knowledge of the programme be increased among staff so that the level of cross-curricular input can be increased. Students engage in work experience for LCVP, at times when the school is closed. It is recommended that, in accordance with best practice, work experience take place during term time to facilitate the monitoring of students.

Students are actively and appropriately facilitated to choose their subjects. Good guidance and advice are provided to parents and students in choosing programmes and subjects. However, there is scope for more informative guidelines for parents and students in relation to choosing TY. In particular, greater clarity is needed in outlining the aims, rationale and content of TY programme.

The quality of short-term and long-term subject planning was good in many cases but it varied considerably across subjects. Some very good planning folders were in evidence, for example, in Art, Business and Science. However, there is a need for greater whole-school approaches to subject planning, with increased focus on active methodologies, AfL strategies and literacy and numeracy development. Subject plans should include reflection on teaching and learning in the subject itself, and action plans for improvement. A common planning template incorporating these elements, if used by all teachers, would greatly assist in promoting consistent and continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

The school management encourages staff in-career development and many teachers have availed of these opportunities. In-career development should now focus more on improvements in teaching and learning strategies. Teaching and learning should form an important part of the agenda at management, staff, and board meetings. Collaboration within the school and with other schools in order to share best practice in teaching and learning should be increased. A short annual report from each subject department on improvements in teaching and learning should be provided to the board. The connections between examination results and the review of and improvements in teaching and learning need to be further explored and documented in subject and programme plans.

The school is welcoming of students with additional and special educational needs and caters well for a number of students on the autistic spectrum. Resource teaching for students with additional educational needs is mainly delivered by withdrawing small groups of students and by the provision of some team teaching in the mainstream setting. Currently, the number of teachers involved in resource teaching is too large. A smaller cohort of teachers with the requisite empathy, skill and qualifications should teach students with the greatest needs. The use of team teaching should also be increased.

There was evidence during the evaluation that the full allocation of resource hours was not being made available to the relevant students by management. Management should provide the full allocation of hours for resource teaching and special education needs and ensure that all of these allocated teaching hours are used exclusively for their intended purpose.

The number and quality of individual education support plans for students with additional needs should be addressed. Recent Department guidelines and circulars on inclusion, including circular 0070/2014, and guidelines from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) should inform improvements in these individual plans and in resource provision for inclusion. The valuable work of the guidance department in profiling and testing needs to be augmented. Greater input from the special needs and resource specialists in the areas of testing, monitoring progress and in planning for improvement is needed for pupils with additional and special needs.

Considerable progress has been made in the use of baseline data from primary schools and data from initial testing of learners in first year. The recently developed SIP which has an initial focus on gathering and analysing data and targeted improvement in literacy in first year is a very worthwhile development. This very good collaborative work is affirmed.

There is a significant involvement by staff and students in extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The production of an annual yearbook and electronic newsletters help to celebrate participation and success. Regular participation in The Young Scientist Exhibition and the Gaisce Awards is most impressive. Co-curricular activities such as debating, enterprise and banking awards, field trips, tours and outings add greatly to student experiences. The strong team sports tradition in Gaelic football, hurling, soccer, basketball and more recently cricket is affirmed. The significant demands these popular and successful team sports make on timetabling, class teaching time and on student wellbeing needs to be planned for and managed carefully. A policy for extracurricular activities should be developed.

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 building and facilities are very well managed. The school is clean and tidy, and canteen facilities for students are well run. A new Green-Schools committee is making a contribution to recycling waste and promotes a clean environment. The board has recently increased security for the building. The school has been well equipped with relevant health and safety equipment. There is an up-to-date health and safety policy. Secretarial and ancillary staff play a key role in the day-to-day running of the school.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

Over thirty lessons were observed during the evaluation. Overall, the quality of learning and teaching was good to very good with examples of excellent practice evident in a number of lessons. However, there is scope for development across important aspects of teaching and learning, such as an increased use of AfL strategies, active teaching methodologies and whole-school approaches to the assignment, monitoring and assessment of homework.

In most lessons instruction was clear, relevant and concise. Learning objectives were clearly identified and shared with learners at the start of almost all lessons and were regularly returned to at the end. Effective links with prior learning were a feature of many teachers' methods.

Teaching took place in a positive and well-disciplined environment and there was a very good rapport between teachers and learners. Teachers were very good role models for their students. Learners were very courteous and well behaved during the evaluation.

Some good examples of the integration of literacy in teaching and learning were noted, but there needs to be a much greater focus on the development of literacy skills among the students. Print-rich environments in classrooms, in corridors and in some class libraries

help to promote literacy and numeracy. The absence of a central school library is a limiting factor in the promotion of reading, research and literacy.

In the best lessons student activity and engagement was at a very high level. For example, in an English lesson students were very actively engaged in learning the art and skill of writing and their oral contributions were also of high quality. ICT was used effectively to enhance teaching and learning in many classes especially with the use of visual images, video clips and PowerPoint presentations.

In many lessons the balance between teacher input and active student engagement was in favour of teacher input. This tended to have a negative impact on the quality of student learning. The quality of assessment across the lessons observed was variable. While questioning strategies in some lessons were impressive, in a number of lessons questions needed to be targeted towards individuals and wait time for student responses needed to be increased. In the excellent lessons, formative assessment was used very effectively to evaluate student progress and to inform and to enhance teaching and learning. For example, very good AfL practices were noted where teachers provided feedback on how to improve. Tests were regularly given and corrected. Good use of peer correcting was evident in a number of lessons. However, there was a need, in a significant number of cases, for the use of AfL principles in the provision of feedback to students. Therefore, the good practices outlined above should be extended to all lessons.

Homework was regularly given and well monitored in many, but not all subjects. The small amount of written homework given in some subjects was a cause for concern. Written comments towards improvement in students' learning were not sufficiently included in copybook work. This needs to be addressed by management and staff at whole-school level and the AfL principles associated with the provision of formative feedback to students should be adopted by all subject departments. All teachers should provide students with regular written comments towards improvement. Exploring ways of giving credit for good copybook work and well-kept note books in term reports would further emphasise the importance of students' written work. The essentials of good written work should be agreed and a copy of these placed in students' journals, note books and copybooks.

Teachers are helpful to and supportive of each other and regularly share teaching resources and ideas at subject meetings and informally. It is recommended that the good teaching practices outlined in this report be shared through a process of peer collaborative review.

In order to drive innovation and improvement in teaching and learning, a staff working group should be established in the school to address the areas already mentioned such as insufficient student input in lessons, more effective questioning strategies and appropriate practices relating to homework. This group should focus on promoting a whole-school approach to the use of active methodologies, AfL strategies and formative written feedback for students.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

The senior management team sees the implementation of recommendations of this report and previous reports as a major priority. For example, an evaluation of Transition Year was carried out and the selection processes were addressed and made more equitable. Statistical analysis of examination results now takes place across all subject areas. The implications of this analysis need to be made more transparent and become a greater focus

of subject planning for improvement. While most recommendations were either fully or partially addressed, there is insufficient transfer of the recommendations contained in individual subject reports to other subject areas.

3.2 Learning and teaching

The school has addressed a number of key issues identified in previous inspection reports. For example, the mathematics report recommended that the principal and deputy principal observe lessons in the interest of overseeing and supporting improvement in teaching and learning. This recommendation has been implemented successfully in some mathematics lessons.

Greater use of the target language was evident in the Irish classes visited. The sharing of specific learning objectives is now common place as recommended in previous History and Irish subject reports. Targeted individual education plans (IEPs) recommended in the report on special education have yet to be developed sufficiently. Improvements have also been made in subject planning based on previous recommendations. However, these are still not consistent across the school.

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

School self-evaluation and review are increasingly on the school's agenda. The board has a realistic and time-bound action plan that sets priorities. Planning, in general, requires a greater focus on improvements in teaching and learning. Key policies including anti-bullying and behaviour policies have been substantially reviewed and improved recently in collaboration with staff, students, and parents.

In light of the school's quality leadership, strong traditions, co-operative spirit and the recent experience of successful implementation of various initiatives, it is evident that the school has the capability to achieve continuous improvement.