An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

Coláiste Bríde
Enniscorthy, County Wexford
Roll number: 63570W

Date of inspection: 11 February 2011
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Coláiste Bríde, Enniscorthy, was undertaken in February 2011. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the quality of teaching and learning in four subjects and in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) were evaluated in detail, and separate reports are available on these subjects and programme. (See section 7 for details). The board of management of the school 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.

INTRODUCTION

While the Mercy Order has been involved in the provision of second level education in Enniscorthy since 1859, Coláiste Bríde itself opened in 1969 following the amalgamation of the secondary schools of both Mercy and Presentation Orders. The new school was built on a site owned by the Mercy Order and it remained under its trusteeship until coming under the auspices of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools’ Trust (CEIST) in 2007. The current lay principal was appointed in the mid-1990s.

The school is situated close to the heart of Enniscorthy. It serves a wide catchment area, with students from both town and rural backgrounds, coming from a total of twenty-three feeder primary schools. The school has a strong Catholic ethos but serves a diverse community drawn from a wide variety of social backgrounds. It previously benefited from having designated disadvantaged status but was not deemed eligible for the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative when this started some years ago.

The school has grown considerably over its history, to a current enrolment of almost 800 female students. Significant extensions were built in 1978, 1992 and again in the late 1990s, while five pre-fabricated classrooms were later added and plans for an additional four new classrooms are now well advanced. While space is at a premium in terms of sports fields, the school has an excellent physical education hall which is also well used for non-sporting school events and by the wider community.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit of the school

Coláiste Bríde has a very clear mission statement: “We are working to promote a secure and caring community environment, where respect, responsibility and Christian commitment grow, drawing forth the positive potential of each individual.” In the development of this mission, the school is very mindful of the aim of the founder of the Mercy Order, Sr. Catherine McAuley, to empower the poor of her time through Catholic education to take their place with dignity in society and to participate fully and creatively in life. The school’s stated aims are to cater for the academic, spiritual, moral, aesthetic, interpersonal and physical needs of the student, allied with the pursuit of tolerance, compassion, justice and equality for all. The Mercy ethos is strongly established even at the front door, where a commemorative fountain, stained glass and other images are used to great effect.

These tenets of the school’s ethos are in line with the core values promoted by its trustees. CEIST seeks to promote spiritual and human development, respect, justice, responsibility and a sense of community. The school’s fostering of students’ academic development also fits well with the
CEIST aim of promoting quality teaching and learning, ensuring a shared vision of education between trustees and school community. CEIST reviews all key school policies, and its officers give both educational and spiritual guidance to the school as required. CEIST runs training courses for boards, in-school management and teachers. These include a ‘Joining the Dots’ programme in theology and faith development for staff members, and ‘Supporting Middle Leaders’ which helps teachers explore and evaluate good practice around teaching and learning.

The trustees emphasise the importance of their schools serving their communities, and offering a curriculum which suits the needs of those communities. The diversity of the community served by Coláiste Bríde and the large numbers of students seeking to gain admission annually are important challenges. The characteristic spirit embodied in the school’s mission statement and in the core values of CEIST are reflected in both school policies and in day-to-day activities to an important degree. The school reports annually to CEIST on progress in relation to key developmental areas. The trustees also expect the school to review and look at changing needs on an ongoing basis.

1.2 School ownership and management

The board of management of Coláiste Bríde has been set up in accordance with the Articles of Management for Catholic Secondary Schools. Board members have availed of training provided by the trustees and the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) for secondary schools. The current board is in its third and final year of operation. At the time of the evaluation, one parent position on the board had been vacant for half an academic year and it is timely that moves be made to complete the board’s membership as soon as possible. The board chairperson and the school principal maintain weekly contact in the progression of board decisions and this is good practice. The board meets, on average, once every six weeks during school time, which is good practice. Minutes of board meetings show it to be significantly occupied with matters of finance, for which there is a sub-committee, the admissions policy and procedures, and furthering the current school building project. The board’s own declared priorities relate to policy development and ratification, and improvements to the school facilities. These are very practical and immediate concerns, and the board is fortunate in the degree of financial, legal and teaching expertise within its ranks. It has been more difficult for the board to focus on longer-term planning, or on the development of issues directly pertaining to teaching and learning. These are areas which merit discussion by the current board, with a view to identifying priorities for the new board to build on when it begins its three-year term in the autumn of 2011. Such developmental planning, ideally over a three-year period, could also fulfil the requirements of the trustees for the school to review and look at its changing needs.

The board of management is commended on the range of policies which have been ratified during its term and the terms of previous boards. There is little or no area of school life which is not covered by a formal policy and in many instances key policies have been reviewed and re-adopted at least once. Some of these will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.1 of this report. The board has shown a keen awareness of the challenges faced in policy development, especially around the school’s admissions policy and procedures, though its role in other key policies such as whole-school guidance and the code of behaviour will need to be somewhat more proactive.

Communication between the board and its nominating bodies is generally good. The trustees receive annual reports from the board and CEIST representatives visit the school a number of times each year, meeting with in-school management and sometimes board representatives. Staff nominees to the board give brief written feedback to the staff via short-term notices in the staffroom, which is satisfactory. The principal, as board secretary, is able to give similar brief reports on key board actions to the representatives of the parents’ council. However, the lack of a formal reporting process between the board and the parents’ council needs to be rectified. The board should also consider giving a formal report to the general body of parents annually, as
recommended in the Education Act 1998. This can be done on the school’s website or within a newsletter.

1.3 In-school management

The senior in-school management team of principal and deputy principal share a strong commitment to the school’s mission statement and are very active in the day to day management of the school, staff and students. They meet early each morning to divide the day’s duties between them and there is considerable interchange between their roles, depending on which of them is available whenever a particular situation develops. This flexibility is commendable. This is a very hard-working and committed team, dedicated to enhancing school life and ensuring that the day-to-day academic and pastoral needs of students and staff continue to be met.

In terms of specific duties, the principal has identified his main role as interfacing with teachers, administrative staff and year heads, and with students and parents in consultation with the year heads, as required. The principal is the chief arbiter of any sanctions which may be imposed for serious breaches of school rules. He takes responsibility for dealings with the Department of Education and Skills relating to buildings and staff allocations. The principal also takes on the role of drafting of the school’s timetable each year and monitors results in certificate examinations. The deputy principal’s duties complement the principal’s to a considerable degree. She deals with many student management issues, organises supervision and substitution, and subject option blocks. The deputy is heavily involved in transition from primary to post-primary school and in home-school contacts, having been a former home-school-community liaison (HSCL) teacher at the school. She also liaises with support services, including the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

Good structures have been put in place to ensure that distributed leadership is effective at Coláiste Bríde. The school has a total of ten assistant-principal posts and fourteen special-duties teacher posts at present. Five assistant principals are deployed as year heads and five special-duties teachers act as assistant year heads. The remaining assistant principals each fulfil a number of administrative duties, including examinations and resource management, while the same is true of the remaining special duties teachers. Some post holders are involved in coordination of programmes and specific educational areas or events, while others deal with day-to-day issues such as uniform monitoring and classroom clean-up. Some post holders indicated that they felt part of a middle management team and all felt that senior management was very open to ideas and to consultation wherever possible. Posts of responsibility have been reviewed in the past, and a number of post holders have been able to change their posts or adapt and develop them as needs arise, in consultation with management. This is very good practice.

The relatively full timetables of post holders make formal meeting times for groups of year heads and other post holders hard to organise, but management is commended for its use of the last period on Wednesdays to facilitate meetings of focused groups of staff. The current potential to devote additional time to formal planning activity should be seen as an opportunity to further enhance middle management’s strong involvement in school planning. There is already a commendably strong culture of informal meetings. Some of the Wednesday slots are used for full staff meetings, chaired by the principal, or for meetings of teachers involved in a particular year group, which are chaired by the relevant year head. It is noted that staff members are invited to contribute items to the agenda of staff meetings and also to give short presentations at meetings on areas of their own expertise or concern. It is also notable that non post-holders carry out many voluntary duties across the school, reinforcing the strong evidence of staff involvement in school life, both during and outside school hours.
The school has a complex admissions policy which will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.1. Student management is viewed as an integral part of the role of every teacher and staff member at the school, but is formally and chiefly within the remit of the year-head structure. The year heads and assistant year heads form teams, each team dealing with approximately 150 students and fulfilling pastoral, disciplinary, attendance and academic monitoring duties to a very high degree. The system is very thoroughly administered by experienced personnel, while very substantial efforts are made across the school to promote the inclusion of all in school life. The overall atmosphere within this busy school is one of calm, and there is remarkably good order along the corridors which fill with close to 800 students several times per day.

The school is currently revising its code of behaviour in line with the guidelines of the NEWB. Although the deadline for completion of this code is fast approaching, there is still a need to factor in considerable involvement of students and parents in its development. The draft policy to date has some important references to promoting positive behaviour and it is recommended that the increased use of positive commentary in student journals and consideration of how short-term rewards can help promote positive behaviour be given consistent expression in the policy. Elements of the policies currently contained in the School Plan on the promotion of responsible behaviour, the student council and awards could be included in the code in this regard. When serious breaches of school rules occur, these are dealt with directly by the principal. As a sizeable number of suspensions are for smoking or being outside the grounds during school time, it is recommended that alternative sanctions be considered in more of such instances.

The school has a very supportive system of head girls, who see their role as promoting good behaviour and positivity through their own example. Head girls are appointed through a combination of the votes of sixth-year students and staff. Up to 2008, the head girls filled the role of a student representative body but it was decided at that point, correctly, that a student council elected by students should be put in place while still retaining the team of eight head girls as school representatives. Management has facilitated training for head girls and student council members and two staff members provide tremendous support as voluntary liaison teachers with the two bodies. A great amount of valuable work has been done by both groups in supporting school life and in sometimes fostering the student voice at the school.

The student council meets approximately twice a month, has identified a number of important areas for improvement in terms of school facilities and has been involved in fundraising activities, open nights and sports days over the years. The current council is ideally placed to consider the code of behaviour and other policies relevant to students as and when its views are sought and it is commendable that this process has now been initiated. At present, although not referenced in the school’s student council policy, two head girls act as sixth-year representatives on the student council, while first year students are represented by fifth-year students from the school’s Meitheal programme. From a structural viewpoint, ideally, it would be preferable if all year groups elected their own student council representatives, including first-year students once they have settled in.

Parents have spoken very positively about the school in general. The parents’ association officers currently in place are relatively new to the roles but were very happy with the attendance of the principal or a liaison teacher at all of their meetings. The school has facilitated the council’s committee meetings and annual general meeting. The use of newsletters and parents’ information evenings has been a very important means of communication with the general body of parents. The current committee has identified, with management, some key issues regarding school facilities but has not had a consistent involvement in school policy formation or review otherwise. This needs to be rectified proactively by the board, senior management and the parents’ representatives. Personal communications with parents regarding student management issues are very good, ranging from parent-teacher meetings to updates on progress or attendance through journals, text messaging and phone calls and written reports sent home after examinations.
The school has very good links with the local community and with outside agencies. The school hall is available for community use in the evenings, while vital arrangements for access to the playing pitches of local GAA and hockey clubs help ensure that sporting activities are well catered for at the school. Local businesses have supported school activities through sponsorship and the school plays its part in a host of community and charitable initiatives which will be touched on in Section 3.3. The school has a wide range of educational partnerships, including links with all its feeder primary schools, the NEWB, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and Enniscorthy Education Centre.

1.4 Management of resources

Coláiste Bríde’s timetable is constructed to ensure a minimum of twenty-eight hours of lesson time. The use of the final period on Wednesdays for planning activities and meetings is facilitated by some shortening of class time but this still leaves the weekly tuition-time allocation at an acceptable twenty-eight hours. In a normal week, within forty periods on the timetable a majority of lessons are of forty-five minutes’ duration and most others are of forty minutes. Shorter Wednesday classes result in some periods being of thirty-five minutes duration, so that a subject which is so timetabled can have substantially less tuition time available cumulatively than one in a forty-five minute slot on another day. Management is urged to consider the feasibility of regularising the timetable, to a point where all periods are of equal duration across the week. It is advised that such a move would require more than the current forty periods per week to be timetabled in order to meet the minimum requirement of twenty-eight hours of tuition time for all students.

In certain instances, as with year heads and coordinators, some hours less than the maximum are allocated to class time in order to give adequate time for agreed day-to-day duties. This allocation is substantially above the minimum class time required for teachers and the time thus made available for other duties is well used. This is good practice and if one period per week could be found for a year heads’ meeting, this would be a valuable additional support to student management. In other cases, teachers who may be below the maximum teaching time have been allocated to learning support work. This is satisfactory, provided that both a core-team approach to support provision is maintained and that these teachers are willing to work in this area. An audit to help identify staff training needs in learning support would help complement the training already accessed from the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and NEPS in the past.

The principal takes the core responsibility for supporting teachers, and is available for individual consultation regarding results in certificate examinations as desired. The school has facilitated attendance at in-career development courses to a high degree. At present, a group of teachers at the school is involved in a Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century (TL 21) project at Enniscorthy Education Centre. Mentoring of new or student teachers is looked after by the deputy principal and by experienced teachers in relevant subject areas. This is very satisfactory.

The school has a highly committed team of support personnel, from secretarial to caretaking staff. The secretarial duties involve both student management and administrative tasks, with staff playing key roles in monitoring attendance and punctuality, assisting teachers and year heads with the pastoral needs of students as required, while also fulfilling vital roles in administration, accounting and general support duties. The school’s caretaking staff also deserves great credit for the fine condition of the school buildings and grounds, and the sports facilities are equally well maintained. Some attractive planting schemes have been put in place and will undoubtedly enhance the building’s appearance in the coming years. Plans are ongoing for improvements to the school’s toilet facilities, improvements for which the student body and parents’ council have lobbied strongly.

Space is at a premium within the school but is managed very well. Staff and students are coping positively with space restrictions in key areas like the staffroom, offices, classrooms and playing
facilities. The move to teacher-based classrooms some years ago has allowed for very high levels of classroom display and storage space in many instances. Subject-specific rooms for Art, Music, Science and Home Economics are very well maintained, and management is anxious to upgrade the home economics facilities in particular when resources permit. The work which has already gone into the renovation and expansion of the centrally located library is further testament to the commitment of management and staff to making optimum use of the available space and facilities.

The school has not felt able to invest hugely in information and communication technology (ICT) development in recent years, although it is commended in having a fully equipped computer room and a number of laptop computers and data projectors in some rooms. The recently received grant aid is a huge opportunity for the school to expand on the use of ICT in lesson delivery and the school is commended for the serious reflection which has gone into ensuring that optimum use is made of this grant during 2011. Great work has already been done in the development of a virtual learning environment (VLE) with teacher and student access and this will undoubtedly become a more prominent part of school life with the augmentation of ICT facilities. In this regard, a review of the post of responsibility dealing with ICT should take into account its imminent expansion across the school and the need to ensure that the promotion of ICT in teaching and learning is given due emphasis. The post could perhaps be separated in the post structure from dealings with administrative and maintenance tasks around ICT.

2. **QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING**

2.1 **The school plan**

The school community engaged very proactively with formal school development planning since its introduction. The approach was a commendably collaborative one, with committees formed to examine specific areas of school life and identify a formal policy in keeping with the Mercy ethos. Scrutiny of the documentation relating to the school’s pastoral care and admissions policies, for example, shows that such committees involved representatives from parents, teachers and the board in the research and drafting stages of policies. The draft policies were then submitted to the teaching staff, the parents’ council and board, as well as being discussed with a selection of students when the policy pertained directly to them. Policies were then ratified by the board. This process was thorough and fully inclusive of the school community.

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department’s *Child Protection Guidelines for Post-primary Schools* (Published September 2004). Confirmation was also provided that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

In recent years, the advent of CEIST has meant that all school policies and core practices are now also submitted to the trustee body, which checks them for consistency with the CEIST ethos and also for legal acceptability. This extra support for school planning has not involved a substantial change of direction from the original Mercy philosophy. A difficulty which has arisen in more recent times has been the availability of time for sustaining the original collaborative model of planning. A narrower focus on policy development has ensued, with groups of key staff members in the main taking responsibility for drafting policies. This is understandable and is also reasonably satisfactory provided that significant opportunities for relevant consultation with parents and students are availed of. These consultative areas of the process do now require renewed emphasis.
The school plan itself is a substantial and well organised document. It contains a number of subdivisions, covering aspects such as a school profile, staff details, the curriculum, student support, ratified policies and those under development. It is a testament to the many hours of work which have gone into school development planning by many in the school community and also provides a solid base for future development. It is noted that many elements of the plan, including up to eighteen ratified school policies, an outline of the mission statement and of the aims of CEIST, are also available on the school website.

The range of school policies in place is very thorough and covers every major aspect of school life. The admissions policy is very detailed and complex and, due in the main to the pressures of space at the school, contains a number of criteria for acceptance of students in potential cases of oversubscription. In the interests of maximum clarity for applicants, clearer definition of the terms ‘school community’ and ‘school catchment area’ within the policy would be advisable. Management has given assurances that all applications are treated fairly and in line with the written admissions policy. Attached to all criteria is the explanation that should there be insufficient places to accommodate all applicants, an independently monitored random selection process will be used to determine those applicants who are successful.

In seeking to improve other aspects of the current policy, it is advised that any references to a request for a voluntary contribution should not be called a ‘fee’ and ought to be separated from the admissions policy or procedures lest they give a misleading impression that enrolment is linked to payment, which is not intended. There is an implied caveat within the policy relating to the admission to the school of students with special educational needs, which is unintended and management is applauded for its assurances that any such restrictions are an oversight and will be removed. Also, the school is advised that in circumstances where the Transition Year (TY) programme is deemed to be oversubscribed, identical procedures for interviewing and accepting applicants should be followed in all instances.

Other key school policies are commendably thorough. The anti-bullying policy is very clear on identifying the roles of all at the school in tackling bullying and is impressively strong on dealing with issues through a ‘no blame’ strategy. Policies have been developed on possible areas of contention, such as access to school records, internet acceptable usage, school uniform and a range of other aspects of school life. In almost all instances, there is a satisfactory currency to the policies, even in instances where they were adopted some years ago, although the health and safety policy is one that is now in need of updating and its review might justifiably include how to approach the issue of smoking previously mentioned. In almost all cases, the date of adoption of policies by the board is recorded on the documents themselves, and in some instances anticipated review dates are also included. This is good practice which merits being employed on all such policies and which can encourage a cyclical approach to planning.

The policies in the developmental section of the school plan testify to the planning work begun in 2009 and 2010 on areas like religious education, the student council, library, school tours and procedures during oral examinations. The commitment of staff to the work on these areas is highly commended and it could help to facilitate such work further if a form of action planning were emphasised, where the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats pertaining to any areas are identified and aims, timeframes and intended outcomes identified in the course of such planning. Where this may be happening already it deserves to be included as part of the ongoing record of reflective practice in school planning.

With a suite of policies in place, the school has appropriately focused on subject planning over the past three to four years. This has been facilitated, like other planning activities, either during the Wednesday afternoon period as previously mentioned, or sometimes in teachers’ own time when specific issues warranted it. Subject departments have been formed and each department has produced a subject planning folder and much excellent practice in is evidenced within these
folders. There is considerable variation in the approach to subject planning taken by different departments and there is need for a greater degree of uniformity. Subject planning has the potential to be a genuine vehicle for driving future planning around teaching and learning and a more consistent approach to the process would facilitate a whole-school approach to such developmental planning. Leadership of subject planning requires more emphasis than has been afforded to it up to now, both by senior management and within the post structure. A broadening of the school development planning portfolio to a full post could help to streamline subject planning and is recommended.

It has been a genuine challenge for the school to find time and space to formulate a more long-term vision of whole-school development through policies and planning, teaching and learning. However, the current work being done on a TL 21 project, which is outlined in the developmental section of the School Plan, has exciting possibilities. It is recommended that areas covered by this project, such as the use of ICT, including the VLE, and differentiation methodology in teaching and learning, be factored into subject planning across all departments to ensure that optimum benefit can be gained from such initiatives. Incrementally, such a focus should in turn address other developmental aspects of the school’s core work. It might examine how assessment-for-learning initiatives, self-directed learning, co-operative learning, special educational needs methodologies and the promotion of literacy and numeracy can be developed across all subjects and can have greatest impact on students’ educational experience. The suggestion of a three-year planning strategy is reiterated here as an optimum means of identifying and developing these or other developmental priorities in a structured manner, complementing the very good work already done in school planning.

3. QUALITY OF CURRICULUM PROVISION

3.1 Curriculum planning and organisation

Coláiste Bríde offers a good range of programmes and a very good range of subjects to its junior cycle students. All subjects are available for study to highest possible levels and are mainly taught in classes of mixed ability. The school did not apply for the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) while it had designated disadvantaged status and its exclusion from DEIS now means that it is ineligible for formal entry to the JCSP. Given the diverse student cohort in junior cycle, there may be elements of JCSP practice, like short-term rewards, statements and key words which could be incorporated to a greater degree into junior cycle curricular planning, and this is offered for possible consideration.

On entry to Coláiste Bríde, students are not required to make any subject choices. First-year students, unless eligible for Irish exemptions, study all the following subjects which are compulsory in a voluntary secondary school: English, Irish, Maths, History, Geography, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Physical Education. Unless meriting a reduced timetable for specific educational reasons, all students also study French, German, Religion, Science, Business Studies, Home Economics, Art and Music for the whole of their first academic year. This makes a total of fourteen examinable subjects and two non-examination subjects (SPHE and Physical Education). For able students, this is a very good, broad base from which to sample subjects and make informed choices before narrowing their focus somewhat in second year. This number of subjects is potentially challenging for weaker or less motivated students, and it is certainly the case that trying to accommodate this number of subjects into a forty-period school week has resulted in shortfalls in terms of desirable time provision for many subjects, both among those evaluated and in other areas.

In addition to the six compulsory examination subjects for secondary schools, Religious Education and one European language remain part of the core suite of subjects to the Junior
Certificate examination. Midway through first year, students are asked to select their foreign language and three other subjects from the remaining Science, Business Studies, Home Economics, Art and Music. This is done in a very open manner and option blocks that best suit student preferences are developed, satisfying almost every student. However, the actual reduction in the number of subjects being studied does not occur until the start of second year. While the merits of giving students a reasonable taste of all possible subjects in junior cycle are undeniable, the shortfalls in teaching time for subjects arising from this year-long sampling is of considerable concern. This policy is deserving of review.

There is no obvious curriculum planning team or board of studies at the school at present. It is recommended that the formation of such a group be given serious consideration and that a review of the junior cycle curriculum be given prominence within its remit. Some concerns regarding the school’s interpretation of mixed-ability class formation are discussed in Section 5.1 and could also be considered by such a curricular body within the school. This may also be the vehicle to consider how best SPHE can be formally placed on the third-year timetable, rather than the current method which sees this compulsory subject take periods from a number of subjects in rotation, which is not best practice.

In senior cycle, students have the option of pursuing the established Leaving Certificate curriculum after the Junior Certificate, or may apply for the school’s TY programme before going on to the Leaving Certificate curriculum the following year. Within Leaving Certificate, depending on subjects chosen, it is also open to students to enter the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school offered the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme for a number of years but fluctuating numbers led to its abandonment seven years ago. Given the school’s own keen awareness of the social and educational disadvantage affecting some of its students, and which have been exacerbated by the economic recession, it would be worthwhile for a curriculum planning team or board of studies to re-examine the possibility of offering the LCA in the coming years.

Curricular provision for the established Leaving Certificate sees a very wide range of subjects available to students. The requirement for students to continue with a European language to Leaving Certificate, due to traditional links to third level access, means that optional subjects are essentially offered in three blocks. All three science subjects and all three business subjects are offered, and are timetabled if sufficient numbers show an interest. Art, Music, Home Economics, History, Geography and core subjects are also offered, while Religious Education is offered both as an examination subject and a non-examination subject as students’ choice dictates. A completely open choice is offered at first, and students’ expressed preferences then dictate how the options are constructed, with more popular choices being available in more than one line. This is very fair and there are no systemic restrictions to student access to subjects or to higher, ordinary or foundation levels in the Leaving Certificate as may be appropriate.

3.2 Arrangements for students’ choice of subjects and programmes

The choices available to students in terms of both junior and senior cycle subjects are very open and are designed to facilitate optimum flexibility in the interests of students. Following student surveys in first year (for junior cycle) and in third year for those considering senior cycle options, the deputy principal takes specific responsibility for the working out of option blocks which best fit student preferences. Resulting satisfaction rates among students are very high, which is a testament to the thorough procedures in place.

The school’s guidance counsellors are commended for the volume and high quality of the support materials employed in helping students with subject selection. Advisory evenings for parents, as well as individual guidance for students if desired, are facilitated by the guidance team. The guidance counsellors organise classes with junior cycle groups by agreement with subject teachers in rotation, while designated guidance classes are timetabled for TY, fifth and sixth year as well. The TY classes in particular are an extra support to students making choices for Leaving
Certificate. Third-year advisory evenings for parents and students cover subject options but also have separate inputs from the coordinators regarding the TY and LCVP options, ensuring that high levels of information are available at this key time.

TY is restricted annually to forty-eight students, and students are advised well in advance that an annual charge of €250 is sought to cover all major costs pertaining to the programme. The school sees forty-eight students as the optimum number which it can accommodate in pairs of practical lessons and also as an ideal number with which to keep the cost of bus trips and outings down to manageable levels. These are understandable reasons for limiting the scale of TY but need to be kept under review. In 2011, over eighty students expressed initial interest in gaining access to the TY programme, which is a tribute to its popularity and success. Given the school’s own appreciation of the positive effects of TY on students, increasing the TY cohort to three class groupings from two will require serious consideration. Once again, this may be an issue deserving of the attention of a curriculum committee or board of studies.

Within the TY programme, there is a very good mix of traditional subjects, offered either across the full year or in half-year modules, which is satisfactory. Many imaginative and innovative topics and teaching methods are employed. Where subjects are used in part to give students a flavour of the potential Leaving Certificate subjects available to them, this is a good support but ought not to cover significant sections of a Leaving Certificate syllabus otherwise, as was observed in some subject plans. On a broader level, TY students are exposed to new learning, and to new ways of learning through *ab initio* Spanish, mini-company, etiquette and community education, among other areas covered in the programme. Other units in areas like personal achievement, special events, enterprise and creativity are offered from year to year as practicable. Community service and work experience also form significant parts of a very comprehensive TY programme which has a dedicated and highly motivated co-ordinator and the support of the school’s programmes coordinator to ensure its success. A high degree of parental information is issued about TY, parents are invited to prize-giving ceremonies and are commendably asked for written evaluation of the programme, as are the students, annually.

Access to the LCVP programme is based on students’ subject groupings, which is correct practice. There is no restriction on access otherwise to this programme, which has over eighty students across fifth and sixth year. Unfortunately, those who opt for LCVP currently suffer reduced access to Religious Education and Physical Education, while the subjects offered in one option block in fifth year are also timetabled for a period less per week than those in other blocks, in order to help coverage of additional LCVP modules in fifth year. These situations need review and again highlight the challenges posed by a forty-period weekly timetable.

Very good work has been done on the delivery of the LCVP programme in the classroom, with good student participation, attractive learning environments and the integration of a good range of teaching methods all being evident. It is suggested that an induction outing or event, and perhaps an application form or interview would encourage the culture of commitment and self-evaluation among students in the LCVP programme even further. Other supports which could be factored in as time permits should include a calendar of LCVP events drawn up early in the academic year, and the use of student and parent questionnaires towards the end of the programme in order to help identify any further areas for development. High levels of monitoring of student progress, and of achievement in certificate examinations, have been identified and are applauded.

### 3.3 Co-curricular and extracurricular provision

Coláiste Bride provides a very impressive range and quality of co-curricular and extracurricular experiences for its students. A high degree of social commitment is evident across all year groups and among staff. For example, charity cycles, walks, hamper appeals, Lenten fasts, carol services, visiting speakers and other initiatives are organised across the school with positive impact on students’ community and societal learning. TY sees a real focus on visiting local community and
care facilities as well as involvement with the Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Wexford Rotary Club, the President’s Awards, Young Social Innovators and other initiatives. The student council has also been involved in supporting a number of important activities, including the school sports day and a ‘Jump for Joy’ event for first-year classes.

Sometimes such invaluable activities are linked to specific subject areas, as with CSPE action projects focusing on community issues and politics or novelty cake-making competitions within Home Economics. A number of subjects make substantial use of display areas inside and outside classrooms to highlight co-curricular activities which students have been involved in. These range from Gaeltacht trips and international school tours with linguistic and historical emphases to involvement in projects and day trips to places relevant to subject work, like the Burren, historic Derry and the Clonskeagh Mosque. School teams have also taken part in numerous debates and public speaking competitions annually, with considerable success. Artistic and musical creativity is strongly encouraged, assisted by involvement in musical and choral societies as well as visits to the Wexford opera festival, performances of Shakespeare and local arts events. For a number of years a school musical has been a feature of the annual calendar, while great musical involvement is also evident in liturgical and celebratory events, almost as a matter of course. The culture of artistic display around the school, from examples of students’ work to some beautiful mosaics along the walls and corridors, is very strong and includes a beautiful water feature near the entrance celebrating 150 years of Mercy education in Enniscorthy.

The school places great emphasis on sporting activity. Among many sports which are played by school teams, ladies’ football, association football, hockey, basketball and camogie are the most prominent team games and school teams have won a number of national titles within the past decade as well as supplying dozens of players to Wexford teams. Individual sports are very well catered for also, with students having achieved great success in activities as diverse as rowing, badminton and golf. Relatively short lunch breaks and lack of on-site outdoor facilities remain challenges to sporting activity but these have been met with enthusiasm and dedication. Good links have been forged with local sports clubs and these have been vital in helping the development of extracurricular activities as far as they have. The school has an excellent indoor sports facility but lack of playing pitches on site means that the use of nearby pitches of GAA, association football and hockey clubs has been a great help to its success.

In most instances, individual teachers involved with different co-curricular and extracurricular activities also take responsibility for publicising such activities, particularly in the local press. This is also very well done over the intercom around the time of morning prayers. The school’s website is well advanced and is a vehicle which can offer further ways of highlighting and supporting the excellent levels of activity around the school, ideally when it is feasible to upload new information on a regular basis, which is imminent. The annual awards night in May, the open night, sports day and other events are all deployed to help promote a vibrant culture of co-curricular and extracurricular activity. Management, staff and students are deserving of great praise for their commitment to these vital areas of school life, and also to ensuring minimal disruption to teaching and learning, as evidenced by efforts made to win back lost class time due to the December 2010 snow.

4. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SUBJECTS

4.1 Planning and preparation

Formal planning meetings are convened periodically to facilitate the development of collaborative subject planning in the school. The practice governing the organisation and co-ordination of any initiatives resulting from these meetings is varied. In some instances specific tasks and roles have been identified and delegated to individuals; in other subject areas a more formal approach to directing and leading subject planning is required. Where this is the case, the appointment of a
subject co-ordinator would be useful in leading this move towards a more collaborative approach to subject planning.

All departments presented a current subject or programme plan during the evaluation. While there is variation in the overall approach to subject planning, all plans outlined a number of organisational arrangements and in some cases common approaches to teaching, assessment and record keeping. Planning at subject department level for students with special educational needs is an area that should be prioritised to identify generic and subject-specific interventions. The quality of curricular planning varied considerably. Good practice was observed where common programmes of work, in some cases linked with student learning outcomes and methodologies, have been developed for year groups. To maintain an impetus in subject planning and a consistent approach to improvement, all subject departments should ensure that future plans include skill-based programmes of work thereby developing the link between planning and classroom practices.

TY plans were presented in the applicable subject areas. Planned student activities and teaching methods appropriate to the overall aims and objectives of the programme were observed in some instances. However in a number of plans reviewed there was an inappropriate over-reliance on Leaving Certificate material. To ensure that the school’s TY programme exposes students to a desired range of self-directed, experiential and problem-based learning opportunities, each subject department should review its TY plan with the overall philosophy of the TY programme in mind.

The level of individual planning and preparation for lessons was good. Good practice included the preparation of resources and teaching aids and in some cases strategies specifically geared towards collaborative learning in the form of pair and group work.

4.2 Learning and teaching

The pace and structure of lessons observed was suitable to students’ levels and range of abilities. In some instances, the proposed learning outcomes of lessons were shared with the students at the beginning. This strategy helped to engage students with the lesson content, enabled them to identify the success criteria for the lesson and facilitated a review of students’ achievements at the end. This practice should be extended across all subject areas.

A range of appropriate methodologies and approaches was observed in most lessons. These methods included group activities, practical work, note making and in a few instances the integration of good quality ICT resources into the learning environment. The further development of collaborative, active and discovery-learning techniques should now be seen as a priority in order to build upon the various good practices observed. It is also important that when group activities and independent learning opportunities are planned a clear focus is identified from the outset in order to maximise student learning and engagement in the task. Team teaching was incorporated successfully into one lesson observed, with the resource teacher and subject specialist working in tandem. This model of provision should be further researched and developed in a gradual and planned manner within the school.

In the majority of lessons, a good range of questioning strategies was used for various purposes. Targeted questions sought to involve all students and to check their recall, open questions to encourage students to express their views. Higher order questions challenged students’ opinions and encouraged them to analyse, interpret and apply information. However this level of effective questioning was not observed in all lessons. In these instances there was an over-emphasis on global questions which tended to result in an unequal level of input from more able students. To address this, subject departments should discuss differentiated questioning techniques and make a concerted effort to include all students in question-and-answer sessions particularly with a view to gaining a fuller appreciation of their progress during lessons.
The incorporation of supplementary materials, worksheets and ICT resources helped to vary students’ learning experiences in some subject areas. In other subjects, increased access to visual and audio-visual equipment should be incorporated to help students to link classroom learning with real-life situations applicable to their programme of study. The school’s planned investment in ICT will also provide subject departments with an opportunity to identify and integrate highly visual and interactive resources into lessons to complement some of the effective traditional practices observed.

Student behaviour was very good in all lessons observed. A positive rapport existed between students and teachers and this helped to foster a positive learning atmosphere. In a few instances this enabled developmental feedback to be given to students in a constructive and highly beneficial manner. Students received a good degree of affirmation and generally displayed a sense of pride in the presentation of their written work.

Generally, students’ understanding, competence and skills were observed to be good. This was evident from students’ recorded laboratory work, the quality of contributions in many lessons and from their diligence and engagement with the assigned task. Student uptake and attainment in certificate examinations in the areas evaluated is consistent with the overall range of abilities. In most areas there are examples of high achievement; however in a few instances there is a need to address the developing trend of choosing ordinary level.

4.3 Assessment

Students are assessed and monitored in class through the incorporation of question-and-answer sessions, homework assignments, portfolio items and class tests. The correction of homework tasks was carried out primarily using two methods: correction by the students themselves using oral prompts from the teacher or classmates, or teacher correction and monitoring of individual students’ written work. It was observed that there was an over-reliance on students correcting their homework tasks themselves. Where this was the case, teacher correction of students’ written work was minimal. It is strongly recommended that all subject departments develop their policy and practices further in relation to the correction of students’ work and agree upon desired levels of comment-based marking and feedback.

Aspects of the school’s assessment practices are currently being reviewed including the instruments used to test incoming first-year students. Reviewing assessment procedures in this manner is good practice. Consideration should now be given to the periodical testing and re-testing of students’ literacy and numeracy skills. The results of such tests would provide a valuable database for tracking and analysing students’ progress. As a whole-school initiative, and to support the current plans to review assessment procedures, subject departments should consider revisiting the principles of assessment for learning through in-service or via the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s website www.ncca.ie.

5. Quality of Support for Students

5.1 Inclusion of students with additional educational needs

The school’s admission policy highlights the principles of inclusion and equality of access and declares a welcome for students with special educational needs, despite the dormant caveat mentioned above. The school is pro-active in gathering information on incoming students with special educational needs well in advance of entry and the change to a different form of testing instrument, which has recently been effected, may also facilitate some retesting of students as they move through junior cycle. This can, in turn, give a good insight into the degree to which interventions, curricular and subject planning are meeting the needs of students with additional learning needs, among others.
The school’s special educational needs policy clearly states the aims of the department as well as giving information on the various staff roles and outlining the models of provision. Three key teachers, including the co-ordinator, who hold suitable post-graduate qualifications are timetabled to deliver most of the college’s provision. The two resource teachers have recently piloted co-operative teaching as a model of support and this deserves every encouragement as an alternative form of provision for students with additional learning needs. There is a very proactive philosophy within the resource department, and a willingness to identify and build on best practice wherever possible. With space and access to ICT being core challenges at present, good use has been made of the available facilities, including a resource room and ready access to the parents’ room for learning support groups. The augmentation of the school’s ICT equipment is being seen as a significant opportunity to enhance provision in education support too, and this is timely.

The school is currently piloting a process for individual educational planning and this is in need of some review. Some key timetabling challenges also need to be reviewed by senior management. As discussed in the accompanying report on Special Educational Needs the practice of creating learning support English and mathematics classes in first year should be discontinued and the same practice in second and third year should be reviewed. Furthermore, it is very important that all of the resource and learning support hours which are allocated to the school are clearly identified on the weekly timetable, and the current delay in deployment of some of these hours for additional support until after pre-examinations is not best practice. Ideally, available learning support hours should be timetabled as the main timetable is being compiled, rather than as an add-on to it. This should also facilitate the development of a core team working in educational support, rather than the somewhat large group of teachers currently so deployed according as their individual timetables may have spare capacity.

The school has a number of very good practices in relation to the inclusion of students from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds. Appropriate application has been made for supports for students for whom English is an additional language. The school shows a keen awareness of the needs of members of the Traveller community and has achieved good levels of integration and progress. Students from minority groups or ethnic backgrounds, and whose religious faith is not Catholic, are well integrated into school life. During Ramadan, for instance, a special room is made available to Muslim students for required prayer and reflection. The lack of access to DEIS has seen the school forego previous supports like a breakfast club and home-school-community liaison teacher. However, all available supports from visiting teacher services and other state or local bodies have been accessed, in line with the general culture of care in the school. The school does not have an overall written policy on inclusion, and this should be rectified; however, the key elements of such a policy are all evident in practice anyway.

5.2 Guidance and student support in the whole-school context

The school has an allocation of 1.36 whole-time equivalent posts for guidance and counselling, approximating to thirty hours, eight of which have come under the guidance enhancement initiative. The total hours are divided between one full-time guidance counsellor and a part-time practitioner. Between them, they take weekly guidance and careers classes with first-year, third-year and TY groups on a rotating basis, and with fifth-year and sixth-year groups once a week, although guidance is not timetabled within the LCVP as a discrete subject at present. Each guidance counsellor takes core responsibility for a number of year groups, though each supports the other as required. The bulk of non-class time is allocated to individual guidance and counselling and it is commendable that each guidance counsellor has an office in which administrative tasks as well as individual counselling can be readily facilitated.

A clear and comprehensive guidance department plan has been developed and details all of these activities as well as the teaching methodology to be used, resources available and clear
developmental priorities. These latter issues include the planned change in the form of assessments used with incoming first-year students, investigating how greater access to ICT for careers classes can be achieved, and reviewing curricular provision in junior cycle. These are pertinent issues which have emerged as areas for review in other sections of this report. It is also praiseworthy that a number of booklets and fliers have been developed by the guidance department, supporting students with subject choice, transition and giving guidance on the value of differential aptitude tests (DATs) for guidance purposes.

The guidance department is appropriately involved in helping students make subject choices, as previously discussed. Guidance personnel are also centrally involved in the administration of formal assessments of in-coming first-year students and also DATs with third-year students. Meetings with parents, facilitating student access to on-line careers information, organising careers talks and visits to colleges, and involvement in the transition programme for first-year students all form part of the duties of the guidance team. Good links have been established with third-level colleges and with outside agencies, while it is commendable that both guidance counsellors have been facilitated by management to attend meetings of local guidance clusters as required.

Whole-school guidance planning is directly linked to the guidance department in that the guidance personnel form part of the whole-school guidance planning team, along with the deputy principal and members of the pastoral care team. From approximately 2005, whole-school guidance planning began in earnest and included a survey of staff on what were felt to be key areas that required focus. The consensus was that pastoral issues were of particular importance, to the extent that the main emphasis of whole-school planning since has been on pastoral care. A range of school planning has evolved from this decision, and policies on pastoral care, bullying, critical incidents, substance abuse, faith development and SPHE have emanated from this approach. Two-hour meetings were facilitated by management for the core work of the whole-school guidance planning team, with up to ten people involved in initiating the process. This is highly commended.

There is a high degree of integration within the student care structures at Coláiste Bríde. Guidance is seen to be about development of the person, so it includes pastoral, whole-person approaches. The main guidance counsellor also serves as a year head and feels able to balance the support and disciplinary roles satisfactorily. This is also true of the year head and assistant year head roles, where support and discipline are seen as two sides of the same coin, so to speak. The school is urged to identify a timetable slot where the core pastoral care team members can meet on a weekly basis, to support the good work already evident in this area.

Very good support for student care has been evident across the school community, encouraged by the aforementioned planning activity. It is acknowledged that some degree of refreshment of the planning process is now required, not least because some of the original team members have retired. It is suggested that the employment of a term such as ‘student support’ might better capture the work done and anticipated within whole-school guidance planning. This does not require any major shift of emphasis, and there are many structures in place to support student care, such as the Meitheal, Rainbows and transition programmes. The school has a commendable network of supports to aid faith development also, with two local curates filling chaplaincy roles as required, a very welcoming prayer room, annual retreats facilitated in-house or involving visits to centres elsewhere and a strong emphasis on prayer as part of the fabric of daily school life.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- Coláiste Bríde is a large and successful school which has been extended on a number of occasions due to increased demand for places.
• The school lives comfortably with its Mercy ethos and is well supported by its trustee body, CEIST.
• The school is a broadly inclusive establishment with an open, though complex, admissions policy.
• The school has a committed and appropriately constituted board of management with considerable legal and financial expertise.
• Good reporting mechanisms exist between the board and most nominating bodies.
• Senior in-school management have a shared commitment to the school, to their individual areas of work and also to dealing with all day-to-day issues as a team.
• The posts of responsibility overall are well suited to the school’s needs, pastoral, academic or administrative.
• A system of year heads and assistants plays a major role in student management.
• Wednesday meetings support student management and expression of staff opinion.
• The general behaviour of students and atmosphere of calm within the school is very noticeable, as is the high level of upkeep around the school and its grounds.
• The current parents’ council is supportive of the school and its ethos.
• A comprehensive school plan and suite of school policies have been developed.
• Broadly satisfactory progress has been made in subject planning in recent years and provides a solid basis for development.
• The school offers a very broad curriculum, including high degrees of subject and programme choice, particularly in senior cycle.
• Co-curricular and extracurricular activities across the school are excellent and involve great commitment from management and staff.
• The overall quality of teaching and learning in the subjects and programmes evaluated was good and in many instances was very good.
• In most subjects, high standards are achieved in certificate examinations.
• The resource department is very proactive in promoting good practice, ICT use, team teaching and overall support for students with additional learning needs.
• The guidance services offered to students, in terms of both career and personal guidance, are of a very high standard.
• Whole-school guidance planning has focused on pastoral care in the main and has been a tremendous support to students and parents.

As a means of building on these strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

• Restoring the full complement of parental representation on the board and more consistent reporting structures between board and parents should be prioritised.
• Greater formal involvement of students and parents in collaborative school planning and decision-making, including on the code of behaviour, is needed.
• Alternative sanctions to suspension in some instances need to be explored.
• A review of the school’s current timetable template, including the number of periods, is recommended in order to identify the optimum structure for curricular delivery.
• The imminent improvement of the school’s ICT facilities should be seen as a great opportunity to support and enhance teaching and learning in the classrooms.
• The school should revisit some definitions and matters relating to catchment area, special educational needs, TY and voluntary contributions within the admissions policy.
• The health and safety policy is in need of review and updating.
• Subject planning needs to be more consistently engaged with and needs leadership to become a driver for ongoing development in teaching and learning.
• Broader engagement with ICT use in class, and with differentiation and assessment for learning, among other aspects of pedagogical development, are recommended in future subject planning work.
• A curriculum committee or board of studies ought to be established to look at the range of subjects and options in junior cycle and the feasibility of reintroducing the LCA in senior cycle, as means of supporting less academic students.
• Such a committee ought also to consider the degree of access to TY which the school currently offers, as well as the degree to which the current forty-period timetable suits the needs of the school and its students.
• In some lessons, greater use of active learning strategies, visuals and ICT and teacher correction of homework have been recommended.
• An end to the practices of class formation involving learning support groups in junior cycle and the creation of additional classes after pre-examinations is advised.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the staff and board of management when the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.

7. RELATED SUBJECT INSPECTION REPORTS

The following related Subject Inspection reports are available:
• Subject Inspection of English – February 2011
• Subject Inspection of Business subjects – February 2011
• Subject Inspection of Special Educational Needs – February 2011
• Subject Inspection of Science and Biology – February 2011
• Programme Evaluation of LCVP – February 2011

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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 Coláiste Bríd Enniscorthy acknowledges the work of the team of inspectors and the genuine interest they showed in every aspect of school life. The board is extremely pleased to receive such a positive report and such an enthusiastic endorsement of the good work undertaken by all the staff of Coláiste Bríd.

The board is pleased that the report acknowledges that:

- The characteristic spirit embodied in the schools mission statement and in the core values of C.E.I.S.T. are reflected in both school policies and in day-to-day activities.

- The in-school management team of principal and deputy principal,...is very hard-working and committed team dedicated to enhancing school life and ensuring that the day-to-day academic and pastoral needs of students and staff continue to be met.

- The overall atmosphere within this busy school is one of calm and there is remarkably good order along the corridors which fill with close to 800 students several times a day.

- The school has very good links with the local community and with outside agencies.

- The school has a highly committed team of support personnel from secretarial to caretaking staff.

- Coláiste Bríd provides a very impressive range and quality of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
• Student behaviour was very good in all lessons observed and a positive rapport existed between students and teachers.

• The overall quality of teaching and learning in subjects and programmes evaluated was good and in many instances was very good.

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

• As a new Board of Management will begin its term of office in October 2011 the process of electing 2 parents to the new board is currently taking place.

• The Health and Safety Policy is currently under review and the Admissions Policy will be reviewed in the near future having regard to recent judgements.

• Every effort will be made to encourage and facilitate the greater formal involvement of parents and students in school planning.

• A review group is currently looking at the feasibility of increasing the number of class periods per week. Since we have dropped our Wednesday meetings at the beginning of this academic year there are now no class periods of 35 minutes – all are either of 40 or 45 minutes duration.

• Because of ongoing work which involves the complete rewiring of the school building and the installation of emergency lighting, a fire alarm system and a new P.A. system it was not practical to invest hugely in information and communication technology. However, now that this work is complete all teaching spaces have been provided with a ceiling-mounted data projector, a P.C., a magnetic whiteboard and a wireless keyboard and mouse. These developments will facilitate the greater use of learning strategies, visuals and I.C.T. in lessons.

• The Croke Park Agreement will create opportunities for departments to more consistently engage with subject planning.

• The degree of access to Transition Year will continue to be considered in the context of maintaining a quality programme.

• The feasibility of reintroducing L.C.A. will be considered should Leaving Certificate results suggest that student needs are not being met by the traditional Leaving Certificate.

• The reference to a fee which occurred in one piece of documentation in relation to T.Y.O. has been removed. All other documentation has always used the term voluntary contribution.

• The concerns expressed in relation to the number of subjects taken in 1st year is valid. This practice will be reviewed and a policy adopted which will take cognisance of the needs of our students and the review of the Junior Certificate which is likely to take place at a national level.
• The Board agrees that ideally learning support hours should be timetabled as the main timetable is being compiled. However, this is not always possible as the main timetable is completed in June while learning support hours may be allocated as late as November.