Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

Presentation Secondary School
Sexton Street, Limerick City
Roll number: 64250J

Date of inspection: 24 September 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of Presentation Secondary School, Sexton Street was undertaken in September 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the quality of teaching and learning in three subjects and in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme was evaluated in detail. Two additional subject inspection reports, which were completed prior to the evaluation, were also considered. Separate reports are available on all these subjects as well as on the LCA programmes. (See section 7 for details). 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

The origins of Presentation Secondary School, Sexton Street, can be traced back to Presentation Primary School, which was founded in 1837 by the Presentation Sisters. Some ninety years after the primary school was established, it was designated a ‘secondary top’. In 1955, the Department of Education sanctioned the establishment of a stand-alone secondary school. The school is now under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education Irish Schools Trust (CEIST).

The school is located in Limerick city, between the inner city and the transition zone. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. One of the school’s unique features is its extensive programme of Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. These are offered under the title of Central College Limerick (CCL), and are mainly provided from nearby premises. The school’s board of management manages CCL, and its tutors are drawn from the school’s teaching staff. This evaluation focuses on the work of the secondary school.

Population levels in the area decreased throughout the nineties, as families started to move from the inner city to the suburbs. This impacted negatively on enrolment levels in the school. More recently, however, there has been an increase in the number of newcomer families taking up residence in the city centre. This is having a positive impact on enrolment levels and patterns. This trend is also observed to be influencing a shift in school culture, with an increasing recognition of the value and importance of both secondary and further education, among both students and parents. This is very promising, both for the school and the members of the local community.

Flexibility has been one of the hallmarks of the school since its inception. For example, in response to the falling enrolment in the late 1990s, the school began to provide PLC courses. Another hallmark of the school is curriculum innovation and change. Over the years, the school has piloted many programmes for students who excelled in ways other than the academic. Currently, it offers almost every available second-level programme, and continues to strive to introduce Transition Year (TY) to the school curriculum.

The school’s capacity to reinvent itself speaks well of school management. It also says much about the teachers, who are the medium through which change happens. The ancillary and administrative staffs have also graciously adapted to changing demands. All of this bodes well for the school going forward.
1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit of the school

There is a common understanding of the school’s characteristic spirit. In describing this spirit all members of the school community made consistent use of the word “care”. This sense of care was reinforced to the members of the inspection team during the in-school week, with observations and discussions illustrating that it influences both actions and decisions. It is clear also, that the school continues to remain loyal to the philosophy and approach of its foundress, Nano Nagle.

The school’s characteristic spirit has been summarised and articulated in its mission statement, which emphasizes the Christian concept of care. The spirit is clearly manifested in the school’s many practices, procedures and policies, and this supports its communication to all. Central to the spirit is the style and quality of the personal interactions and communications which were obvious amongst and between all members of the school community. This is recognised as a personification of the spirit, supporting, promoting and fostering its perpetuation.

The school’s pastoral approach is a core dimension of the school and a clear expression of the school’s spirit, a point that will be revisited in Section 5 of the report.

1.2 School ownership and management

The board, comprising eight members, is properly constituted. A trustee’s nominee acts as chairperson, and the principal acts as secretary to the board. Nomination and election procedures are as stipulated for boards of voluntary secondary schools. At the time of the whole-school evaluation, the board was in the final weeks of its three-year term. A percentage of board members had served on the board previously, while other members were newly appointed. This is positive, as it seeks to provide access to experience as well as to new ideas and fresh approaches.

A feature of the board’s membership is the long and loyal relationship with the school that a percentage of members enjoy. The contribution of the chairperson is deserving of particular credit, as this individual has been involved with the school for many years, and in many guises, the last nine as chairperson of the board. In the election of future boards, and in the interest of providing for decision-making which is both informed and objective, consideration ought to be given to seeking to balance the number of board members who demonstrate familiarity with the school with those who are less familiar. Efforts to establish greater gender balance in terms of board composition are also further encouraged.

CEIST seeks to support school management in the development of the school, through a faith development team, a school support team, and a financial support team.

Formal board meetings are held approximately six times a year, with additional meetings convened as required. Board members receive an appropriate amount of notification for meetings, and systems are in place to allow nominees to contribute to agendas. The good practice of issuing agendas and minutes of the previous board meetings in advance of the next meeting is also followed in the school. The board’s finance sub-committee meets prior to each board meeting and provides a report on school finance. All of this is positive.
Board members are very clear on their collective role, due in part to the fact that all members have accessed relevant training. Supporting the principal, to whom they delegate responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, is what members recognise as their primary role, function and responsibility. It is clear that they value and respect the principal’s insights and judgements.

Board members demonstrate a healthy working relationship. Intense discussion is the board’s key operating principle. This is positive, as it facilitates the making of consensual decisions. It is good that, as required, external, qualified personnel are consulted as part of the decision-making process, particularly in matters pertaining to the board’s legal obligations. The principle that clearly guides the decision-making of the board is the need to balance the care of the individual child in the school with that of all the children in the school. From this alone, it is obvious that in their work board members seek to preserve, promote and foster the characteristic spirit of the school.

The relationship between board members and the senior management team is very good, with the chair of the board emphasising that “staff and management are one in the school… united by the same vision, aims and objectives”. Board members place great value on the principal’s report, which is provided at each board meeting. In addition to keeping the board informed of day-to-day school business, it also facilitates the board in acknowledging students’ participation and achievement, as well as teacher involvement. The board has been highly supportive of the principal’s vision for the school plant, which has resulted in a greatly enhance environment for all, both in terms of a place to learn and a place to work. The board also seeks to foster a relationship with students. For example, representatives from the student council were invited to meet with the board last year, in order to share with board members their hopes and ambitions for the school.

Nominating bodies are kept informed of relevant board business. In the case of staff, an agreed report is posted on a staff notice board, while the parents’ association receives a verbal account. Copies of minutes are also forwarded to the trustees, together with an end-of-year report. It is recommended that the board formalise the reporting procedures to the members of the parents’ association with regard to board business. To this end, it is suggested that the agreed written report should issue to both teacher and parent nominees. It is also recommended, with reference to Section 20 of The Education Act, 1998, that the board publish an annual report on the operation and performance of the school. In this report particular reference should be made to the achievement of objectives, as set out in the annual school plan.

The board has arranged for the preparation of a school plan and oversees the development of all school policies, discussing and contributing to each policy in advance of ratification. The board has ratified the majority of the legally required policies. Consideration should be given to publishing ratified policies on the new school website. The board is encouraged in its intentions to advance the development and ratification of the remaining legally required policies, namely a data protection policy; an internet safety: acceptable use policy; a substance use policy; and a relationship and sexuality education (RSE) policy. It is also strongly recommended that the board formally adopt the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-primary Schools (Department of Education and Science, September 2004) as a matter of urgency.

The board recognises that school development planning has been very beneficial to the school, with a number of benefits cited: it has focused everyone’s attention on what is important in the school, has heightened awareness on all levels in relation to how the school operates, and has cemented school practice and procedures. In relation to the school’s planning obligations under DEIS, and now that school-specific targets have been set in the areas of literacy, numeracy, retention, attendance and attainment, it is strongly suggested
that the board play an active part in the monitoring and evaluation of the actions that are seeking to address these areas. It is suggested, for example, that a progress report be provided for discussion at each board meeting.

The board has a number of strengths, each contributing to its effectiveness as a management unit. These include: knowledge, both internal and external; loyalty; solidarity; respect for all and a willingness to listen in combination with a related flexibility.

1.3 In-school management

The principal and deputy principal work well as a senior management team, and their working relationship is complementary in nature. It is a relationship based on mutual respect. Both individuals play a key role in the day-to-day management of the school. There is a clear, although undocumented, division of tasks between the principal and the deputy principal. It is suggested that the duties attached to each role be documented. Both the principal and deputy principal have had a long relationship with the school, and therefore possess a deep knowledge and understanding of the school, both past and present. They are also strongly committed to the school, its students and its staff.

The particular context of the school, which includes a substantial and very successful programme of PLC courses, makes the senior management role much more complex and demanding than that of the average principal and deputy principal. The achievements in this role are, however, significant, and include: the growth of the PLC curriculum; the strong demand for places on courses; and the imminent possibility of some of the school’s PLC courses being formally recognised as a route to access undergraduate studies in The University of Limerick (UL). These achievements are indicative of the efficiency, effectiveness, commitment and determination of senior management, as well as that of the school’s very hard-working PLC co-ordinator. Much credit is due also to the teaching staff for what has been achieved, and it signals their capacity for change, together with their willingness to up-skill and assume new roles and responsibilities.

Daily meetings of the principal and deputy principal allow for a constructive exchange of information that is essential to the smooth operation of the school. This is positive. In addition, the senior management team meet as part of a series of timetabled, weekly meetings with various staff groups. Both principal and deputy principal view these meetings as one of the key management structures of the school.

The senior management team, with the support of the board, and the assistance of staff, leads change in the school. This is very obvious, both in the recent rejuvenation of the school plant and in the development and growth of CCL, both of which required a lot of management’s time and energies. The principal and deputy principal demonstrate a shared vision for the school, which can be summarised as follows: to maintain and ideally increase enrolment in the secondary school; to establish the secondary school as a recognised centre of excellence for teaching and learning and to launch it as a recognised digital school and a school of the future. Management is clear on how this vision will be achieved. For example, senior management stated that “What we do every day counts”, and “We need to do, and to be seen to do, everything well”. As the school’s provision for PLC courses is now firmly established and operating successfully, and as the plant has been significantly improved, it is suggested that the energies of all begin to focus on realising the expressed vision for Presentation Secondary School. If this vision is to become a reality, all short-term, medium-term and long-term planning activities must find their basis in this vision.

Members of the school’s middle management team, which is inclusive of assistant principals (APs) and special duties teachers (SDTs), have clearly defined roles and
responsibilities. Collectively, they carry out their assigned duties in an effective, efficient and very committed manner. Both groups feel empowered by management to explore different approaches to assigned duties and responsibilities. This, which provides a good example of how management devolves leadership, is very positive. This is very much supported by the principal who said “I can trust my staff to do what it is they do best” and “I see myself as a leader of leaders”.

The contribution that the middle management team makes to the day-to-day operation of the school is recognised and valued by both senior management and the board. While a percentage of the members of the middle management team meet with senior management as part of their assigned duties, the group as a whole do not formally meet with management. Provision for such meetings should be considered, as it would provide support to senior management while fostering a sense of involvement in the management of the school for both the APs and SDTs. Over and above the work completed by assistant principals and special duties teachers, many of the school’s non-post holders have assumed responsibility, on a voluntary basis, for areas or tasks deemed important to the successful operation of the school or the management of students. This spirit, as well as the associated commitment, is acknowledged and credited.

On the very rare occasion that both principal and deputy principal are required to be absent from school on the same day, assistant principals have been given the opportunity to act up. This is very positive, indicating senior management’s faith and trust in the members of the middle management team. There is also a clear openness to looking at ways in which leadership roles could be further devolved to assistant principals. This should be explored by senior management, in conjunction with the relevant members of the middle management team. This would further enhance perceptions amongst the middle management team of the opportunities that the positions offer in relation to managing and leading.

Minor changes to the schedule of posts have occurred in recent years. This demonstrates the staff’s willingness to change duties in response to an identified need or shortfall. The existence of this level of adaptability and the associated willingness to change is a very positive feature of the staff. The last major review of the school’s schedule of posts predates the appointment of the current principal. The existing schedule indicates an imbalance in the work associated with duties. In addition, work associated with posts is balanced in favour of the secondary school rather than the college. In light of all three findings, it is recommended that the current schedule of posts be reviewed. This should be preceded by a needs analysis that involves all members of the teaching staff, and which seeks to discuss the extent to which needs are being met by the current schedule of posts. It is suggested, that as part of the recommended review of posts, and in light of the relatively small numbers in each year group, some consideration be given to assigning year tutors to cycles as opposed to year groups. The creation, as required, of a new assistant year tutor role designed to support the year tutor could also be considered.

Good communication is recognised by management as essential in the school, and past experiences have highlighted the need to give information quickly and clearly. As a result, management is constantly examining how communications can be enhanced. This is positive. In recent times, for example, and with a view to streamlining communications between senior management and staff, a principal’s electronic notice board has been installed in the staffroom. The open-door policy of both members of the senior management team enables easy access for staff to the opinions, guidance and support of the principal and deputy principal.

Other established communication systems that support an exchange of information between senior management and staff, as well as among staff, include: staff days; staffroom
announcements; memos; notice boards; emails and texts. It is suggested that the scheduling of staffroom announcements for particular days, in addition to the current scheduling for particular times, should be considered. This, together perhaps with the posting of an announcement summary in the staffroom, would help in ensuring that this information is heard or received by all staff members. Communication in the school is enhanced by the existence of very positive staff relations, a collegial atmosphere, and a genuine interest in, regard for and encouragement of colleagues’ work and endeavours. Staff meetings take place each term, with the role of chairperson rotating. This provides another example of the principal’s desire to devolve roles normally associated with senior management.

The board and the senior management team are very supportive of teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD), and teachers too are deeply committed to their own CPD. Supports to facilitate a greater sharing of information and training garnered from individuals’ attendance at CPD workshops and seminars should be investigated. In light of recently acquired information communication technology (ICT) hardware, it is recommended that the teaching staff continue to up-skill in the area of ICT, which has the potential to transform teaching and learning.

The school operates a very open enrolment and admission’s policy, with the diversity of the student population-bearing testament to this finding.

It is recognised in the school that indiscipline affects the learning of all students. As a result, much work has gone into the development of the school’s code of behaviour. This has resulted in the establishment of a very fair and transparent code of behaviour. The process is interpreted in a flow diagram and therefore is very accessible to all. It outlines expectations and details the procedures that apply in cases of non-compliance. Year tutors, class teachers and subject teachers work together in the fostering of acceptable behaviour in students. Year tutors support management in relation to the handling of unacceptable behaviour, as they come together to form the discipline committee. Year tutors also monitor students who are at risk of being required to present to the discipline committee. This is supported by management’s provision for a weekly meeting of year tutors with senior management. Students were very well behaved during the lessons observed as part of the WSE. A very well-developed and carefully-structured student school journal assists subject teachers, class teachers and year tutors in monitoring students’ attendance, participation and achievement.

A short assembly is organised once a week for each year group. This facilitates year tutors in the monitoring of students’ journals and uniforms. It is good that the principal attends occasionally. It is suggested that some consideration be given to the organisation of a longer assembly for each year group at key points during the school year, as appropriate to each year group. The focus in these assemblies might move to the promotion of positive behaviour versus the monitoring and checking function that current assemblies emphasise.

The school’s behaviour support classroom is a very valuable asset in relation to the management of students’ behaviour. Its title, ‘The Room for Improvement’ highlights the philosophical principle that guides how this classroom functions in Presentation Secondary School. It is recognised by all as a space where students can learn the skills necessary to participate in the mainstream classroom in an appropriate and meaningful way. The difference this support has made to students and teachers alike was emphasised in many of the meetings. The staff that established this facility in the school, and those who continue to manage and organise it, are deserving of much recognition and praise.

Much time and energy goes into recording, monitoring and reporting on students’ attendance and effective systems have been established to support this work, with plans to further enhance existing systems well advanced. Significantly, the school is also very
conscious of the need to encourage attendance, and this principle guides how teachers engage with students returning to school after a period of absenteeism. The success of this approach was cited a number of times over the course of the evaluation.

The establishment of a student council facilitates students in playing a more formal role in the life of the school. An important consideration for the further development of the council is the need for it to be fully representative of all year groups in the school. Parents’ involvement in the life and work of the school is encouraged. The parents’ association in the school works in a committed fashion to support school management and staff in the provision of a good quality education for students. Firm lines of communication exist between the school and home, facilitated by a range of mechanisms. A number of links have been established between the school and various agencies and local community groups. These have been established with a view to supporting students’ wide-ranging needs, and in order to expand student awareness of the local, national and global community.

1.4 Management of resources

Provision for students generously meets the requirements of circular M29/95, which relates to time in school. Management seeks to assign teachers to subjects and class groups according to their qualifications, expertise, experience and interests. In recent years, in some subject departments due to factors such as staff turnover it has not been possible to rotate teachers across levels and programmes. However, this general approach is one that management seeks to adopt in the deployment of teaching staff.

The school environment is both aesthetically pleasing and comfortable. Both the building and the grounds are very well maintained, and substantial credit is due to the school’s highly committed caretakers for this positive finding. The significant contribution of the school’s administrative staff is also acknowledged and praised, both in terms of their fulfilment of assigned duties and their contribution to the care of staff, students and parents alike.

The school’s impressive facilities are spread over two floors. Specialist classrooms are provided for a number of subjects, including Home Economics, Music and Art, while modern science laboratories are also provided. A business and English room have also been established. The school accommodates a gymnasium, together with a separate fitness suite, and in recent times a state-of-the-art climbing wall has been erected. An exhibition centre fondly referred to in the school as ‘Halla an t-Solais’ offers a space in which students can socialise. A lunchroom is also provided. The school houses a prayer space and a library. A lift facilitates equality of access for all students to all school facilities. Base classrooms, which were found to be clean and orderly, would benefit from a greater display of subject-specific material. It is suggested that this material would be most valuable if its design and content promoted the development of students’ literacy and numeracy levels. While generally speaking subjects are not allocated budgets, requests for resources are, budget permitting, treated favourably.

High-speed broadband is available throughout the school and college campus. At the time of the evaluation, laptops and interactive data projectors were being installed in all classrooms. This will greatly assist management and staff in their bid to launch the school as a recognised digital school and a school of the future. Interactive whiteboards have been provided in the school’s English, business and music rooms, as well as in one of the school’s science laboratories. In addition, three computer suites have been developed, with another classroom having a small but valuable bank of computers. It is good to note that first-year students, together with students studying the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA),
Leaving Certificate Vocational (LCVP) and Junior Certificate School Programmes (JCSP), are timetabled for these rooms. Upon completion of the instalment of ICT equipment in all classrooms, teachers will have access to up-to-the-minute, state-of-the-art, equipment in every classroom. The provision of ICT intended to support teachers in administrative tasks, as well as in preparation for lessons, needs exploration. Management’s intention to investigate internally the possibility of funding a part-time ICT technician is fully encouraged.

Management has completed much work in the area of health and safety, and it is an area that is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Budding environmentalists are being catered for in the school by the recent establishment of a Green Schools Working Group. The desire to achieve Green Flag status for the school is guiding the work of this group. In addition, junior-cycle students were successful in a recent UNESCO Youth Environmentalists competition, winning an overall award for their work in the area of sustainability.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 The school plan

While the school has been engaged in school development planning for a number of years, significant progress has been made in recent years. Much credit is due to management and staff for this achievement, and particularly to the school’s planning co-ordinator, who carefully oversees this aspect of the school’s work. It is positive to note that the co-ordinator is facilitated by management to attend relevant in-service. Equally, it is good that the school has availed of the support and guidance which was provided by personnel attached to the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI).

The task group approach to whole-school planning is well established in the school. Meetings of individual task groups, for example the guidance planning team, are organised on a needs basis. It is positive that the business of these meetings is recorded, as are the outcomes of discussions and the intentions for future meetings.

Priorities for planning are identified on an annual basis. These are filed in the school’s planning folder, which also houses minutes, meeting schedules, records of staff planning days, including relevant PowerPoint presentations, details of in-service availed of, the composition of planning task groups and information relating to processes and procedures. The comprehensiveness of this file is commended.

The permanent section of the school plan includes the school’s mission statement and aims. It also describes the school context, briefly outlines the key school structures and identifies by title the agencies that support the work of the school. It is suggested that the plan would be enhanced if some elaboration were provided in relation to the latter two areas. This section of the plan lacks data relating to the curriculum that is offered in the school and, therefore, this is identified as an aspect for development.

The school plan also includes a table that provides a very clear overview of policy development in the school. It identifies completed policies, policies that are in progress, policies that are currently under review and policies where work still needs to be initiated. This is noted as a valuable summary document. It is suggested that information relating to the ratification dates of completed policies be included in this table. Furthermore, the addition of another column, one that would be used to indicate a planned review date for
completed policies, is suggested for consideration. Both of these additions would support ongoing review, a very important aspect of school development planning.

The school’s code of behaviour is currently under review, and it is good that this work is being guided by the National Education Welfare Board’s (NEWB) guidelines. All concerned are encouraged in their efforts to expedite the review and the finalisation or development of the remaining legally required policies, as well as those that are required by circular, the detail of which is provided in section 1.2 of this report. The website of the Department of Education and Skills offers guidelines, resources, templates, and in some instances sample policies, that should guide and direct this work.

Contrary to the requirements of post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006, the board of management has not, as of yet, formally adopted the Department’s Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (published September 2004). It is strongly recommended that this be done as a matter of urgency. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed. Confirmation was also provided that staff received input from personnel associated with the Health Service Executive (HSE) in relation to child protection. Once the guidelines have been formally adopted, and with a view to ensuring that all staff are completely familiar with the procedures to be followed, it would be beneficial to provide further input to staff. In addition, a copy of the ratified procedures should be provided to all staff, including all new staff. It is also suggested that the staff handbook might accommodate a brief synopsis of procedures and protocols, to which teachers could refer if necessary.

Consistent with best practice, the school plan also contains a developmental section. The introduction to this section outlines the factors affecting the school’s development needs. However, these needs are not entirely clear to the reader. This section of the plan should be revisited. While priorities have been identified for the school, there was no clear evidence of the existence of action plans for current priorities. As a result, it is recommended that work be initiated in relation to the production of a set of action plans that would complement the identified priorities. There appears also to be quite an extensive list of priorities for the current school year, and while there is an obvious overlap between some of these, perhaps greater progress might be made in the short-term if the list was refined and modified. The possible categorisation of items into short-term, medium-term and long-term priorities is suggested for consideration.

Subject planning received a new lease of life in recent times. This work was led by the school’s planning co-ordinator and the relevant subject co-ordinators. Subject planning will be dealt with in more detail in section 4.1. It is commendable that the planning co-ordinator met with the members of both the science and Gaeilge departments, in order to support them in advance of scheduled subject inspections. Following the inspection of Science another meeting was held, and this was used to garner what had been learned from the experience. Arising from this, it was decided that the members of the science department would share their experiences of the process with the whole staff, and in doing so would highlight good practice in relation to planning, teaching and learning and assessment. This is equally positive. The provision of formal time for subject department meetings is an area that needs to be revisited with an emphasis on providing adequate time, and with a view to ensuring equality of opportunity to plan collaboratively as subject departments.

Significant work in relation to DEIS planning has also been undertaken in recent years. Initially, energies focused on the gathering of baseline data in relation to eight specified areas (attendance and retention, literacy and numeracy, examination attainment and educational progression, and partnership with parents and others). This worked spanned 2008/2009. Comprehensive records have been maintained. This is commended. These records indicate that the members of the DEIS planning core team, and in particular the
deputy principal, worked very hard to compile information that would be both meaningful and relevant. The quality of the data that was gathered and collated is very high, although it is noted that the data in relation to numeracy would benefit from some further work. This phase culminated in the eventual determination of six target areas, namely attendance and retention, literacy and numeracy, and attainment and progression. It is clear that this decision was highly informed by the research undertaken.

The sharing of baseline data with the whole staff took place during the 2009/2010 academic year. From this point, whole-staff involvement was significant, with teachers involved in the identification of existing measures and areas for development in relation to the school’s intended target areas. In addition, the measures that could be implemented in order to bring about improvements were explored with whole-staff task groups. This overall approach is highly praised, firstly because it is highly supportive of the concept and practice of self-evaluation and secondly, for the sense of ownership it fostered in the school in relation to DEIS planning priorities. Records relating to this work indicate teachers’ commitment to the task, as well as their concern and hopes for the students in the school. In relation to existing measures, of which there is a wealth, consideration ought to be given to drawing these together in one single document, under each of the relevant DEIS planning headings. This would ensure a consistency in approach on a whole-school level but, more importantly, it would also acknowledge all the very good work that is currently underway.

It is commendable that at this point specific targets have been set in relation to improving retention and attendance, numeracy and literacy levels, and examination attainment and educational progression. A set of related measures has also been devised. It is suggested that the school’s literacy and numeracy policy should be revisited in light of the relevant DEIS planning targets and the associated improvement measures. As part of this work the role of subject teachers needs to be emphasised, as every teacher has a role to play here, not just the teachers of English and Mathematics.

While there is a general whole-school awareness of the targets and measures, it is recommended that a greater sense of ownership needs to be fostered. Similarly, responsibility for the implementation of all of the measures needs to be embraced fully, by everyone. This awareness and responsibility needs to be evident at subject department level via, for example, subject plans, and also at an individual teacher level through, for example, classroom practice. Strategies to support discussion around what subject departments and individual teachers can do on a day-to-day basis to support the achievement of targets, needs further exploration. Action-planning templates may be of value to teachers in relation to the work required of them here. Such work will make a very valuable contribution to overall student learning, and therefore the related areas of attendance, retention, attainment and progression. Teachers will also require support, possibly through CPD, in the task of addressing and enhancing literacy and numeracy levels as part of general subject teaching.

The school has now entered a very important phase of DEIS planning, where the implementation of the plan needs to be monitored. The SDPI have offered guidance in relation to the school’s approach to this. The adoption of this approach is strongly advocated.

3. Quality of Curriculum Provision

3.1 Curriculum planning and organisation

Presentation Secondary School offers a broad curriculum, and a wide range of post-Leaving Certificate courses is available through the CCL programme.
Over and above the established Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, students of Presentation Secondary School also have access to a range of additional programmes. This includes the JCSP, the LCVP and the LCA programme. This level of provision is commended.

Junior Certificate students in the school are offered a very broad and balanced curriculum. Over the three-year cycle some provision is also made for ICT. JCSP students also study Drama and Music Appreciation. The curriculum that is offered to established Leaving Certificate students is equally broad and balanced.

In relation to the organisation of junior-cycle students into class groups, it is recommended that consideration be given to organising all non-JCSP students into mixed-ability classes, with setting for English, Gaeilge and Mathematics as deemed necessary, but preferably not until the end of first year. The concurrent timetabling of English, Gaeilge and Mathematics, which is generally practiced in the school, is commended, as it ensures greater equality of access for all students to different levels in each of the three key core subjects.

In light of the school’s identification, as part of DEIS planning, of a series of targets relating to the enhancement of students’ numeracy levels, it is good to note that Mathematics is timetabled for one period each day across all year groups. The provision of an extra period of English per week for all first-year students, for use as a reading class, would be a valuable asset in light of the identification of similar targets related to enhancing students’ literacy levels.

Aspirations to study subjects at higher level are cultivated by teachers, but despite their best efforts, a large percentage of students opt to sit subjects at ordinary level in the certificate examinations. This needs to be addressed under DEIS planning. As part of this, the provision of higher-level classes in the core subjects at senior cycle needs to be prioritised. The teaching staff is encouraged in its efforts to build students’ confidence in their own abilities which, in turn, will give students the motivation to set ambitious personal goals.

A review of the current master timetable indicates a balanced approach to timetabling. It is clear that efforts are made to seek to ensure that students’ contact with any one subject is well spread over the weekly timetable and, generally speaking, that the class period that any one subject is allocated over the course of each week will vary from day-to-day, between morning and afternoon. Management’s attention is drawn, however, to the placement of subjects such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Civic, Social, and Political Education, where students’ contact with the subject is limited to once a week.

There are some issues and inequities evident in relation to the provision that is made for Physical Education, both in junior and senior cycles. These should be considered in the future timetabling of this subject in the school. In relation to providing for the Junior Cycle Physical Education syllabus, it should be noted that in participating in the implementation of this syllabus, schools are required to comply with the provisions of Circular M15/05, and, thereby, provide a minimum allocation of two periods per week, timetabled together, at junior cycle.

Looking more holistically at the timetable it would appear that the eight-period day, versus the more usual practice nationally of providing a nine-period day, impacts negatively on subject provision. It is giving rise to an inequity in provision in various subjects, from year group to year group and also too, on occasion, from class group to class group. It is recommended that management and staff review the structure of the school day.

As appropriate, the school offers students the option of taking the JCSP. It is most positive that almost all of the recommendations contained in the 2006 JCSP evaluation have been
implemented. JCSP students in Presentation Secondary School study eight pre-determined subjects to certificate level. A number of other subjects are studied on a modular basis. Students are also timetabled for SPHE, Religious Education and Physical Education, and over the three-year cycle some provision is also made for Drama, Guidance, ICT and Music Appreciation. The co-ordinator, together with management and staff, is encouraged to review the JCSP curriculum, with a particular emphasis on how the curriculum offered could be made less limiting in light of the school’s senior-cycle programme and subject options. As part of this review, it should be noted that, in accordance with the recommendations made during the evaluation of the JCSP, as well as during the more recent 2009 evaluation of Science, consideration should be given to the inclusion of Science in the curriculum for JCSP students.

Annual efforts are continuing to prove unsuccessful in relation to the implementation of a TY programme in the school. While interest levels rose this year, numbers were not sufficient to make the programme viable. It is positive to note that it is management’s intention to revisit the proposal again with the current third-year class. Its efforts, and those of the relevant staff, are acknowledged.

The timetable is structured so that all Established Leaving Certificate students take the LCVP. The programme is well co-ordinated. The success of the programme in the school is evident in the fact that many Presentation Secondary School students use the LCVP results in the calculation of CAO points. It is good to note that the students progressing from the JCSP are supported in accessing this programme through the provision of extra business classes and ab initio Spanish.

The LCA programme is a valued element of the school’s curriculum. The co-ordination requirements of the programme are met effectively. The method of selecting students for the programme follows good practice. The curriculum is founded, to a commendable extent, on the preferences and interests expressed by the students. The specialisms offered help develop appropriate skills for students to move into employment or into further education. The courses are often appropriately timetabled. However, in the case of a number of courses, a re-balancing of teaching time should be considered. The specific details in relation to this recommendation are provided in the appended LCA programme evaluation report. Four elective modules meet the requirements of the programme. It is observed that the number of modules offered is in excess of that required. In the context of ensuring adequate time provision for all elements of the programme, it is recommended that the very generous provision of elective courses be reviewed.

3.2 Arrangements for students’ choice of subjects and programmes

Students attending Presentation Secondary School are provided with a very good choice of programme and subjects. The approach to subject choice varies from junior to senior cycle.

A taster programme operates in first year in relation to the optional subjects on offer in the school for Junior Certificate students. As a result, these students study Business and Home Economics for the duration of the year, and Art and Music for a half-year each. This is commended for the exposure to these four subjects that this system provides. In addition, these students get the opportunity to study French and German for a few weeks of first term, following which they choose the language they wish to study for the remainder of the year and to Junior Certificate level. Once again, this is commended for its value in the making of informed choices.

The school operates a system of open subject choice, where subject bands are generated from the outcomes of student surveys. This approach, which maximises students’ access to
the subjects offered on the school’s curriculum, is highly praised. It is positive that flexibility is exercised at all levels in the case of students who, on realising that their original choice was not necessarily the best one for them, seek to change from one subject to another.

As detailed in the previous section, JCSP is available to Junior Certificate students in the school who have been identified as likely to benefit from the support it provides. It is good that parents and guardians are fully consulted prior to the introduction of a reduced curriculum for these students. Senior-cycle students have the option of taking LCVP and LCA.

Much time and energy is devoted to informing, guiding and supporting students, and their parents, in the making of subject and programme choices. The school’s two guidance counsellors are central figures in the administration and management of this work. Class visits and individual appointments for students and, if desired parents, are some of the measures employed to assist in the difficult task of making subject and programme choices. An annual open-night and a number of information evenings, which are designed to support the presentation of facts on subjects and programmes, are also organised. In addition, the guidance counsellors conduct aptitude tests, the outcomes of which inform the guidance provided to students and parents in relation to the decisions that need to be made around subjects and programmes. Other school personnel, including year heads, class teachers, subject teachers and programme co-ordinators, play an important role in terms of providing guidance, information and advice to students in relation to their subject and programme choices.

### 3.3 Co-curricular and extra-curricular provision

Presentation Secondary School offers a large number of activities and opportunities that aim to provide for a range of students’ interests, talents and abilities, and that seek to support and enhance learning. These include cultural, aesthetic, community, social and sporting pursuits and events. The school newsletter, which is published two to three times a year, illustrates the richness of students’ experiences in the school. It also suggests a healthy level of student participation and documents a number of notable achievements. The vast majority of activities are provided for on a voluntary basis by the staff. This additional commitment is acknowledged and praised.

It is clear that management and staff, in planning and providing for co-curricular and extracurricular activities, are conscious of seeking to ensure that activities are accessible to all. Cór Nano Nagle, the school choir, serves as a fine example of this, in that membership is open to all students, regardless of whether or not they are studying Music. This equality of access is highly commended. The choir is a recognised as a very significant feature of school life in Presentation Secondary School, performing at all key school events, as well as in the local community. The choir also participates in national competitions.

Co-curricular activities are organised with a view to extending student learning and appreciation beyond the four walls of the classroom. The additional teacher planning time that this approach requires is acknowledged, as is teachers’ belief in the valuable contribution that co-curricular and extracurricular activities can make to students’ learning. Management is very supportive of teachers in their planning for, and provision of, subject-based activities. It is very positive that funding is made available for students whose financial circumstances may otherwise limit or restrict their participation. In addition to field trip and excursions, guest speakers are invited to speak to students on an ongoing basis. Students’ participation in competitions, including debating and public speaking, is also encouraged and supported by the staff.
Links with outside agencies have been established with a view to supporting the school’s provision for co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and efforts are made on an ongoing basis to maintain and further such links. The school has, for example, forged a partnership with University of Limerick and Limerick City Sports Partnership. This has resulted in the provision of after-school activities such as aerobics, boxercise and circuit training for senior students.

A number of particular student interests have led to the establishment of school clubs. These include more traditional clubs such as a library club, and more novel clubs such as a nail-painting club. The latter indicates a clear willingness and desire on the part of management and staff to respond to students’ personal interests.

A number of options exist for students who wish to partake in a competitive sporting activity. Basketball and badminton are open to all, and football is provided in junior cycle. In addition, the school also offers horse riding and climbing. It is good to note that non-competitive participation is also facilitated in some of these sports. An annual prize-giving day seeks to acknowledge and award students’ participation and achievement in these sporting pursuits. Awards presented as part of this annual event include: ‘Player of the Year’; ‘Most Dedicated Player’; ‘Most Improved Player’; and ‘Best Participant’. The scope of such awards is praised.

A number of other whole-school activities are organised annually, for example, a school sport’s day. In addition, activities are also planned to correspond with national events, such as the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Readathon and Seachtain na Gaeilge. New opportunities are also constantly being examined. In recent times, for example, and with a view to celebrating diversity, an international day has been organised in the school. Music and dress were chosen as the basis for this celebration, as it facilitated a very open and accessible sharing of culture. School tours are another important element of co-curricular provision. The most recent tour saw students travel to Barcelona. Students are also encouraged to get involved in fundraising activities.

Management, staff, parents and students are very aware of the positive impact of such provision, with both parents and teachers indicating their great satisfaction with the range and number of opportunities available in the school. Management and staff are encouraged to continue to sustain and develop this very important aspect of school life.

4. **QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SUBJECTS**

4.1 **Planning and preparation**

Individual planning for lessons observed was good. Most teachers were well prepared and had produced a range of materials, visual, digital and print-based, designed to engage students in the lessons and the planned learning. The use of interactive whiteboards, textbooks, worksheets, photocopied material, handouts, photographs, maps, and revision exercises, was noted. ICT was integrated into many lessons and was observed to be effective in supporting student learning. Given the recent significant enhancement of these resources in the school, a number of the teachers and subject departments view the integration of ICT into their own practice as a significant yet achievable challenge. The sharing of skills and resources in this, and other areas of classroom practice, is recommended to build on the good practices already in place.

It is clear that a planning process is in place and that there is a culture of good quality informal communication and collaboration. Subject meetings take place at various intervals throughout the year and the outcomes of these meetings are recorded. However, strategies
to facilitate a whole-school approach, including a focus on literacy and numeracy and assessment for learning (AfL) are recommended in subject inspection reports. In the subjects evaluated, almost all were at a developmental stage in relation to collaborative subject planning. While one subject had advanced the planning process to include intended learning outcomes and good strategies for sharing effective practice and resources, in almost all cases the subject plan had not developed beyond a basic template provided by the relevant support service. Subject departments should deepen their engagement with subject planning. They should move beyond the agreement of common programmes of work towards planning for the development of teaching and learning strategies, intended and time-bound learning outcomes, the integration of ICT and supports for literacy and numeracy through linking with the education support team in the school. The quality of collaborative subject-department planning would be greatly improved if additional formal time for this work was prioritised by senior management. Collaborative subject-department planning should be linked with the schools DEIS planning process and have the clear goal of improving students’ learning and enhancing their experience in the classroom.

4.2 Learning and teaching

All inspectors described the students as being well behaved and cooperative at all times in the lessons observed. A collaborative positive atmosphere pervaded, with teachers availing of many opportunities to praise their students, thus helping the development of students’ levels of self-confidence. In turn the students responded very positively to their teachers and there was a caring, positive classroom atmosphere.

Inspectors reported a good standard of teaching and learning in most of the lessons observed, with some very good teaching practice also evident. Successful lessons were well structured and at an appropriate pace for students’ levels and abilities. The good practice of setting lesson objectives was a feature of some of the lessons observed. Moving from this to the use of learning outcomes with students should be considered, as this would provide teachers and students with a mechanism to evaluate learning.

Instruction was clear and concise. In language lessons, there was good use of the target language. Teaching methodologies observed included didactic delivery, role-play, discussion, investigative learning, note-taking, pair and group work and the completion of worksheets. In the most successful lessons, good provision was made for a variety of student-centred activities, and in such instances there was a good balance between teacher and student input in the lesson. Where good student engagement was evident, good student learning was observed. As a result, an emphasis on active learning methodologies in all lesson types is recommended. This approach would also allow students the opportunity to work together, thereby further enhancing the learning experience for all students.

Strategies to aid newcomer students and students with special educational needs were observed in some lessons. In other lessons, there was a clear focus on the development of student literacy, this is very highly commended as it complements the school’s DEIS planning. Both literacy and numeracy as a focus need to be considered by all subject departments in the delivery of all lessons. In addition, subject departments should prioritise discussions around effective teaching and learning strategies for mixed-ability class groups.

Questioning was used to stimulate and provide interaction with students. Effective direct questioning was used to evaluate students’ prior learning, to check their understanding, to link with previous work completed and in some instances as a challenge for students to apply learned information to different scenarios and situations. The inclusion of the latter level and type of questioning is further encouraged as a means of developing students’ higher-order thinking skills.
In the main, inspectors reported that the students were interested and displayed enthusiasm for their subjects in the lessons observed. In addition, students’ also displayed a good attitude and showed confidence when engaged in interactions during the evaluation.

4.3 Assessment

Both formative and summative assessment procedures are used in Presentation Secondary School to monitor students’ progress. Formal assessment procedures, such as end-of-term examinations, are organised throughout the school year. The use of common assessments in some subjects is commended as a way of providing for standardisation across year groups. Contact is maintained with parents through the school journal and progress reports are issued after the whole-school examinations. Parent-teacher meetings are organised for each year group annually.

There was an emphasis on continuous assessment in many subjects. Students’ prior learning was reviewed and they were set achievable tasks. The inclusion of practical work as part of continuous assessment was seen as an effective means of motivating students.

Some good practice was observed with regard to the setting, correction and monitoring of homework. In other instances, there was room for improvement. The inclusion of formative comments in copybooks was noted in some instances. This practice is beneficial in that it both affirms and encourages students in their learning. If adopted as a whole-school approach, it could be one of the tools used by teachers to enhance students’ personal perceptions of their ability to study, and the related desire to take higher-level papers. It links with AFL, which has being explored with some class groups, as part of the schools recent involvement in the Learning School Project. In time, the extension of the use of AFL to all class groups is recommended. The school has put in place strategies to encourage students to take more care with their homework, including a successful homework competition for junior-cycle students.

It is recommended that an analysis of results in the certificate examinations be carried out and, in line with DEIS planning objectives in relation to raising achievement levels of students, that this analysis be used to inform subject department planning and teaching and learning.

5. Quality of Support for Students

5.1 Inclusion of students with additional educational needs

School systems, procedures, and practices demonstrate a clear appreciation and understanding of inclusion. This is evident in the fact that students with special educational needs, traveller students and students for whom English is an additional language are included in mainstream classes on all school programmes.

The school’s arrangement for the transfer of students from primary school supports the early identification of students with additional educational needs. Pre-entry testing and contact with feeder primary schools are very valuable aspects of this process. Further testing takes place upon entry to the school in September. The support and work of the school’s guidance department is significant in this regard.

The plan for the provision for students with special educational needs is well constructed, and focuses on the very practical aspects of providing for these students. The same can be said of the school’s special educational needs policy. A small, core team of interested and willing teachers, who are qualified or have up-skilled in the area, is charged with the
delivery of support to students with special educational needs. These individuals devote much voluntary time to their work, particularly in relation to the completion of tasks associated with administration and co-ordination. It is recommended that the key personnel associated with delivering support to students with special and additional educational needs be further supported in their work through the provision of time to meet formally on a more regular basis.

The team’s vision in terms of providing for students with special educational needs, one which sees all teachers as having an important role to play in the task, is evident in the support and information booklet that has been prepared in the school for all teachers. It was produced with a view to developing the understanding, skills and knowledge of mainstream subject teachers for teaching students with special educational needs in their classrooms. It is recommended that consideration be given to the provision of further opportunities for whole-staff engagement in CPD activities designed to support teachers in providing for students with special educational needs.

Clear procedures exist in relation to the provision of support to students, be they students with low achievement or special educational needs, those entitled to resource hours (including traveller students and students for whom English is an additional language), or students for whom learning support may be deemed beneficial. The school’s model of provision is very flexible, with withdrawal of students operating alongside team-teaching or, as feasible, the division of classes into smaller groups. The very good practice of retesting students in receipt of resource and learning support in order to monitor their progress is evident.

Individual profiles are prepared for students with special educational needs and efforts are made to develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with low incidence conditions. In addition, a file is also maintained on each student in receipt of learning support or resource hours. Every effort is made to keep parents informed and involved. The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) teacher plays a pivotal role in this regard. In addition to contacting and visiting parents, the HSCL teacher works in collaboration with teachers in the provision of programmes such as Paired Reading, Mathematics for Fun, Cookery for Fun, Science for Fun, and Grandparents’ Day, in which parents are encouraged to participate. All of this is very positive.

The relevant department is generally well resourced, although clearly it would benefit from the provision of a bigger space for the delivery of support. The current space would then make a very valuable office space for the significant administrative work attached to the role. The school’s provision for students with special educational needs also benefits from the support and assistance of a small team of special needs assistants, who are very committed to their work, enjoying both it and their involvement in the school generally.

The school welcomes newcomer students, and is embracing the potential and opportunities that the presence of these students offers. The structures and systems established in the school to support newcomer students are well developed. Of particular credit is the fact that overall responsibility for these students has been devolved to one key teacher, and that this individual has accessed and availed of relevant training and support. A room has also been allocated for the provision of English as an additional language support to these students, as appropriate. A very positive finding is that provision is made for the retesting of these students on two separate occasions during the academic year, in order to monitor their progress.

Valuable and effective links have been established with external support agencies and services. External personnel, who are recognised by the school as providing very valuable support and guidance, include the visiting teacher for travellers, the visiting teachers for
students with physical disabilities, the psychologist attached to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPs), a music therapist, social workers and personnel attached to the School Completion Programme (SCP). The establishment of these links is commended.

5.2 Guidance and student support in the whole-school context

The school’s guidance allocation is being put to very good and very full use, in terms of providing personal, educational and vocational guidance to students. A good balance has been achieved between working with students individually, in small groups and in classes. Structured guidance programmes are delivered to all students.

The guidance department plays a significant and effective role in relation to many of the key aspects of school life including: students’ transition from primary to secondary; enrolment; induction; aptitude testing; subject and programme choices; career choices and, as required, referrals. Management supports the work of this department through, for example, the provision of a well-equipped guidance suite. Both guidance counsellors are also facilitated to attend relevant CPD.

A whole-school guidance planning task group has been formed, with meetings held on a regular basis. This group has spearheaded much activity, and some change. Arising from the work of this task group, a number of very positive strategy groups have been formed, for example, a homework and anti-bullying strategy group. To date the focus of these strategy groups is on students’ application to their studies, student welfare, and the general well-being of the student body.

A whole-school guidance plan has been prepared. It comprehensively details aspects of the timetabled curriculum, as well as aspects of school organisation relating to career/vocational guidance, educational guidance and personal/social guidance. It illustrates, very effectively, the wide range and number of personnel involved in the provision of guidance to students in Presentation Secondary School.

In relation to the provision of support and guidance, the impact of the HSCL position in the school is very significant. It supports the school’s provision for students who are considered to be the most disadvantaged and the most in need of guidance and support. The work engaged in by the school’s HSCL co-ordinator seeks to foster higher levels of participation, retention and achievement amongst students, whilst encouraging parental interest. Much credit is due to all concerned for the full and very good use that is being made of this allocation.

Overall provision for Social, Personal and Health Education is good in the school, both in terms of support from management and in relation to planning and preparation. A Relationships and Sexuality programme is also provided for senior cycle students.

The school’s support for and care of its students is, undeniably, one of its strongest traits. There exists a number of identifiable features of school organisation which support a whole-school approach to support and care of students. These include, for example: the care group and the year tutor, who hold weekly meetings; class teachers; the first-year induction programme; the open-door policy of key personnel, including those of senior management and the ‘Tuair Aire’ staffroom notice board. Furthermore, in the observation of teachers’ interactions with students, it was clear that supporting students is central to the work of all staff members. Students are also encouraged to support one another in the school. The buddy system for newcomer students, and the student council work with incoming first years, are two fine examples of this.
The spiritual care of students is very well provided for in the school. The role of the school chaplain is significant in this regard, as is that of the school’s religion teachers.

In conclusion, every effort is made by management and staff to seek to ensure that students of Presentation Secondary School are carefully guided and directed, fully supported and genuinely cared for during their time in the school.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- The school’s characteristic spirit is clearly manifested in the school’s practices, procedures and policies.
- Presentation Secondary School benefits from the work of a strong and capable senior management team, which has the support of an interested and effective board of management.
- Members of the school’s middle management team have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and they carry out their assigned duties in an effective, efficient and very committed manner.
- The school’s teaching staff is highly committed and very hard working.
- Management seeks to assign teaching staff to subjects and class groups according to their qualifications, expertise, experience and interests.
- Management is very supportive of teachers’ continuing professional development and teachers too are deeply committed to their own continuing professional development.
- The environment is aesthetically pleasing, comfortable and well maintained, while all subject departments and all classrooms are well-equipped, particularly in relation to information and communications technology. As a result, the school is most conducive to student learning.
- The school includes a very popular college of further education, namely Central College Limerick (CCL).
- Presentation Secondary School operates a very open enrolment and admission’s policy and, thereby, welcomes all students.
- The atmosphere in the school during this evaluation was very positive. This can be attributed, in part, to the development and implementation of an extremely fair and very transparent code of behaviour.
- The school is benefiting greatly from an increased enrolment of students who demonstrate a good work ethic and who, as a result, are achieving well in the certificate examinations.
- The school has made much progress in school development planning.
- High quality baseline data has been compiled by the members of the DEIS planning team, and in particular the deputy principal.
- Presentation Secondary school offers a broad curriculum, and students have access to a range of programmes.
- A large number and range of extracurricular activities and opportunities are provided for students.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Presentation Secondary School is good, with some very good teaching practice observed during the inspection.
- School systems, procedures and practices demonstrate a clear appreciation and understanding of inclusion.
• All students are very well cared for in Presentation Secondary School, and good quality support and guidance is available to both students and parents on an ongoing basis.

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

• The board should advance the development of the remaining legally required policies, as well as those required by circular. In particular, it is strongly recommended that the Child Protection Guidelines be formally adopted as a matter of urgency.
• If the school’s stated vision is to become a reality, it is recommended that all short-term, medium-term and long-term planning activities find their basis in this vision.
• In line with DEIS planning objectives, raising students’ literacy and numeracy levels must become a specific aim of every subject teacher, and should be addressed in the subject classroom on a daily basis. In support of this, management should endeavor to provide more formal time for subject department meetings where relevant strategies could be explored.
• The teaching staff is encouraged in its efforts to build students’ confidence in their own abilities which, in turn, will give students the capacity to set ambitious personal goals.

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 Science – October 2009
• Subject Inspection of Gaeilge – May 2010
• Subject Inspection of English – September 2010
• Subject Inspection of French – September 2010
• Subject Inspection of Geography – September 2010
• Programme Evaluation: Leaving Certificate Applied – September 2010

Published October 2011