

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Pobalscoil Rosmini
Drumcondra, Dublin 9
Roll number: 91344V

Date of inspection: 22 January 2010



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT
OIDEACHAIS | OF EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | A N D S K I L L S

WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT

A whole-school evaluation of Pobalscoil Rosmini was undertaken in January 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 was evaluated in detail. Two subjects were evaluated in advance. Separate reports are available on these subjects (see Section 7 for details). The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

INTRODUCTION

In 1982 Pobalscoil Rosmini was established as a new community school under the trusteeship of the Rosminian Order and the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. The new school entity assumed the functions of Rosmini College which was founded in 1970 and managed by the Rosminian Order in the intervening twelve years. Pobalscoil Rosmini is situated beside St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired and its work originally centred on the provision of second level education to visually impaired and sighted boys. It remained a school for boys until 2001 when it became co-educational. The curricular programmes on offer in Pobalscoil Rosmini are the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), the Established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

Pobalscoil Rosmini is one of a number of second-level schools in the locality and it attracts students from as many as fourteen primary schools representing a wide catchment area. The school caters for students of all ability levels and, currently, twenty-six students with a visual impairment attend the school. The school's close association with St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired and its commitment to providing for students, with such impairments, make for a unique and inclusive learning environment. The current enrolment is 333 students, comprising 256 boys and 77 girls. The last number of years has seen a decrease in the number of students enrolling in first year. The reversal of this trend and the achievement of a more even gender balance in the student cohort have been identified as areas for development by the school. In the interests of preserving this unique learning environment it is essential that the school addresses these areas successfully.

The school participates in the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Science's programme for educational inclusion.

1. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

1.1 Characteristic spirit of the school

The ethos of Pobalscoil Rosmini is based on the ideals and educational philosophies of the founder of the Rosminian order, Antonio Rosmini, that the 'education of the individual must have a perfect unity catering for physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic needs' and that 'discipline is necessary for the good order of the school but must be of such a nature that the school is used for the students' sake and not the reverse'. A mission statement for the school has not yet been developed and a clear articulation of the overall vision of the school was not

provided by any representative of the school community. It is recommended that all members of the school community work on developing a mission statement and a vision for the school. These should reflect the school's core values and they should inform every aspect of school life.

It was asserted throughout the evaluation that the characteristic spirit of the school is one of care for students and inclusion. This was borne out in the evidence gathered by inspectors. The school's involvement with St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired, the inclusion of students with a visual impairment in a range of school activities, the very wide range of curricular programmes and subjects offered, and the school's provision for students of all ability levels contribute to the inclusive nature of the school. The spirit of inclusion is also reflected in the school's admissions policy. The students expressed appreciation for the commitment of their teachers in helping them achieve success in the certificate examinations and for the supports provided by the school. Members of the parents' association described the school as a welcoming, inclusive and caring community. In particular, they acknowledged the commitment of teachers in providing additional support for students at times in their school lives when they need it most. The contribution that students themselves make to the development of an inclusive and caring school environment through their involvement in the school's '*Meitheal*' group is highly valued within the school.

Pobalscoil Rosmini has earned a reputation in the locality for its good provision for students with special educational needs and for its inclusive ethos. This, combined with changes in local demographics, means that student profile is becoming increasingly diverse. Consequently, the school is facing a new and challenging phase in its development, one that will require foresight, planning and leadership on multiple fronts.

1.2 School ownership and management

The current board of management was appointed in 2008 and is properly constituted. The board meets eight times per year and demonstrates an awareness of its roles and responsibilities. Draft minutes and agenda are circulated prior to meetings. This good practice facilitates effective continuity between meetings and allows members time to consider issues and to prepare well for meetings. Decisions are, in general, reached by consensus. At the conclusion of each meeting, the board agrees on decisions to be reported back to their nominating bodies. This good practice is important in ensuring that consistency in reporting and confidentiality of board decisions are both maintained.

The board is involved in policy development. Draft policies come before the board, are discussed, agreed and then ratified. To date a considerable number of policies have been considered by the board. Some are work in progress. For example the homework policy is being drafted and a staff working group has been set up to undertake this task. Policies that have been ratified by the board include: the code of behaviour, the anti-bullying policy, the substance use policy, the attendance policy, and the special educational needs (SEN) policy. The board is currently working on a review of the school's admissions policy. In keeping with good practice, a staff advisory committee has been established to work on this review. In addition, the code of behaviour has been identified for review in the near future. This is representative of the extensive work of the board in relation to policy development. It is recommended, however, that the board takes a more active role in ensuring the effective implementation of the policies once they have been developed. A pre-requisite for this will be the development of better lines of communication between the board and all members of the school community particularly students and the wider parent body.

The board stated that one of its main priorities is to promote the school so as to increase enrolment. A need has also been identified for the school to attract enrolments of students from as broad an ability range as possible. It is strongly recommended that the trustees become actively engaged with the board and with staff in addressing the two priorities of increasing enrolment and of diversifying the school population. A collaborative, proactive approach is required by all the partners and action is required urgently. It is the view of the inspection team that the long-term viability of the school depends heavily on this success of these actions.

School management actively encourages and facilitates teacher continuing professional development (CPD). In addition to whole-school events in areas such as assessment for learning (AfL), mixed-ability teaching, and restorative justice practices teachers have attended many subject-specific courses. This commitment on the part of management and of individual staff members is important in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning and it is praiseworthy.

The board has recently been active in responding to requests made by staff to identify and address school issues. To this end the board has established a committee comprising a small group of staff members. The chairperson of the board has met with staff representatives and has addressed a staff meeting. The work of the committee is currently in progress and has been guided by a facilitator appointed by the board. When its work is complete the committee will then meet with the board to report its findings. This will assist the board in planning for the future.

The school has in place a parents' association which is affiliated to the Parents' Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (PACCS). Some members of the parents' association are active members of PACCS and regularly attend meetings of that body. Officers of the parents' association are elected at the annual general meeting and the current committee was formed in 2008. Parents can remain in the parents' association for as long as they have a child attending the school. Meetings are held once per month. Communication with the parents' association and the general parent body is maintained through the distribution of letters. It is suggested that space be provided on the school's website to facilitate further communication between the parents' association and the wider school community.

The members of the parents' association are committed to supporting the school through the work that they undertake. In addition to fundraising, the parents' association supports the school through assisting with the organisation of the sixth-year student graduation, the TY awards night and the general student awards night. The open night that is held for parents and students of incoming first year is used by the parents' association as a valuable opportunity to connect with parents who are new to the school and to promote the work of the association. The parents' association has also been involved in school policy development. In line with good practice draft versions of some policies come before the association, they are discussed and observations are fed back to the board of management.

The commitment of teachers, the quality of teaching and the generosity of teachers in facilitating extracurricular activities were identified by the parents' association as strengths of Pobalscoil Rosmini. However, parents see the need for the maintenance of high expectations for student achievement, the need for more consistent implementation of the code of behaviour and the resulting discipline problems as areas of concern.

1.3 In-school management

The in-school management team comprises the senior management team of principal and deputy principal, and the middle management team of nine assistant principals and eleven special duties

teachers. The two members of the senior management team are long standing members of the staff at Pobalscoil Rosmini, having both been appointed to the school when it was established. The principal has been in his current position for the last fifteen years and the deputy principal was appointed in November 2005.

This is a time when the school is facing significant challenges and needs the support and direction of strong leadership. There is a need for the whole school community to work together as a team under the guidance and leadership of good management. Consultation is needed to develop a shared common vision for the school and to ensure that every member of staff is working towards a common objective. While the leadership role of the principal is a pivotal one in seeing the school through these challenging times, the commitment and support of the whole school community will be essential in achieving a successful outcome for the school. During the evaluation there was considerable evidence that the management and leadership currently operating in Pobalscoil Rosmini are not adequate to deal with these challenges.

Communication between the principal and deputy principal is characterised by discussion as the need arises. In order to facilitate the principal and deputy principal in working together as an effective and united team, it is recommended that time be set aside each day for the two members of the senior management team to meet. Furthermore, it is recommended that the principal and deputy principal set aside meeting time to engage in meaningful reflection around the school's current position in relation to all aspects of school life. Taking this as a starting point, they should establish for themselves a set of priorities for improvement for the school and engage in planning in the wider sense to achieve them.

The division of duties between the principal and deputy principal have evolved over time; they have never been formally established, defined or reviewed. It is recommended that the principal and deputy principal complete a comprehensive audit of their duties and from this, agree and establish accurate role definitions and descriptions. These should be subject to annual review and revision so as to ensure that they are meeting the current needs of the school.

Through his role in the appointment and promotion of school staff, in acting as secretary to the board of management and in managing the school finances the principal contributes to the work of the school. In addition, he acts as a link between the school and the parent body and between the school and outside agencies. The principal, however, maintains a quiet, unassuming profile in the day-to-day running of the school and describes his overall approach as not being overly formal.

The deputy principal makes a significant contribution to the work of the school in various ways; she plays a lead role in the subject department planning process, in devising the school timetable, in organising the substitution and supervision roster, in liaising with feeder primary schools and in the overall promotion of the school. In addition, both the principal and deputy principal attend meetings of the care team and post holders.

The duties attaching to posts of responsibility and post descriptions have evolved over time. Based on the evidence available, while there has been some adjustment made to post duties over the years, no formal review of posts has been carried out in the school to date. The existing schedule of posts does not meet all of the current needs of the school. Some of the needs are being addressed by the deputy principal and some are not being addressed at all. It is recommended that an audit be carried out of the needs of the school. The schedule of posts should then be reviewed in the light of this audit and a revised schedule of posts should be created. The revised schedule of posts of responsibility should be one that comprehensively meets the needs of

the school. Senior management, middle management, and staff, should be consulted, where appropriate, as part of the audit of needs and review of posts.

The quality of formal communication throughout the school community is variable. Formal routine communication is maintained between staff members through the use of pigeon holes and notice boards in the staff room which is good. Staff meetings are held eight times per year. The principal chairs staff meetings and the minutes are taken by staff members on a rotating basis. Staff members are encouraged to add items to the agenda of staff meetings; this is also in keeping with good practice. A student council was not formed in the current year. This and the absence of a diary in the school office or a diary of events in the staffroom are examples of poor communication practices. In addition, a school bell has not operated for approximately a year and a half, and consequently there is no means of communicating the change of class times to the school as a whole. It is recommended that steps be taken to improve the systems of communication in the school. In particular there is a need for regularised communication with students. Consideration should be given to the regular holding of student assemblies.

Overall, the relationship between senior management and middle management and between senior management and the staff as a whole is characterised by indecision, lack of follow through with affirmative action, frustration and non-cooperation. On the one hand, changes are made without the necessary consultation and, on the other hand, meetings are held, issues are discussed but no decision is made and no action taken. This combination has contributed to serious pressure being put on vital elements of the school as a functioning organisation. The ladder of referral, the discipline structure, the care system and some systems of communication are adversely affected and this is having serious consequences for the effective running of the school. During the course of the evaluation, allegations regarding the negative effect that indecision and lack of action are having on the safety and security of the school environment were made by members of staff. This finding reflects negatively on the quality of in-school management.

Students do not currently have a formal voice in the school due to the discontinuation of the student council. A student council existed in the school until May 2009 and a special duties teacher acted as liaison teacher. The responsibilities of this special duties post holder have subsequently been changed and a student council was not formed in September 2009. The role of student council liaison teacher should not necessarily form part of a special duties post and it is regrettable that this very valuable means of promoting student partnership has lapsed. Every effort should be made to reinstate the student council as a matter of priority.

It was clearly evident during the evaluation there are serious problems in relation to the effective and consistent implementation of the code of behaviour in the management of students. A very good code of behaviour exists; it is positively framed and is written in clear and accessible language. All the relevant partners were involved in its creation which is good. A working group was set up to examine classroom management and to develop a corresponding policy. The code of behaviour is due for review in accordance with the National Education and Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines in the near future. However, most groups interviewed; including representatives of teachers, middle management, parents, students and ancillary staff, expressed strong concerns about discipline problems in the school, albeit, in relation to a minority of students. There was concrete evidence that the lack of appropriate supervision of students and the resulting lack of adequate levels of order in the school are putting vulnerable members of the school community at risk, particularly those with a visual impairment. It was also evident throughout the evaluation that these discipline problems are having a negative effect on staff morale. This is very serious. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that the school prioritises the management of student behaviour as an issue to be addressed on a whole-school basis as a

matter of urgency. This will require the involvement of all members of the wider school community and external support may be deemed necessary.

The rate of student suspensions is very high. During the course of the 2008/2009 school year forty-two students were suspended; this represents eleven per cent of the student population for that year. A clear and graded ladder of intervention is set out in the discipline policy. However, a tiered approach to the use of these appropriate sanctions needs to be implemented consistently.

This is a time in the school where fairness and consistency in the implementation of the code of behaviour and the discipline policy are vital to maintaining an appropriate level of order in the school. The school is experiencing significant challenges in working as a cohesive unit to cope with the stresses being put on its systems. While the members of school community are committed to overcoming the difficulties that now present, they are investing their efforts in many different directions and they are not achieving the results that they desire.

The school has in place a behavioural unit to cater for students who are deemed unmanageable in mainstream classes. Currently there are a small number of students in the unit. These students are present in school for a reduced timetable and have only five class periods per day. They study a limited number of subjects. The students who were in the behaviour unit at the time of the evaluation had been there for nine weeks and inspectors were concerned around the suitability of this environment for students for this long a period of time. It is important that this intervention is genuinely very short term.

The behavioural unit is funded by DEIS. The objectives of participation in the DEIS programme centre on improving learning outcomes for students who are at an educational disadvantage. It is evident that the arrangements made for the students in the unit are not adequately designed to achieve this objective. It is strongly recommended that this unit be reviewed in accordance with the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) guidelines and that appropriate action be taken as a matter of priority.

It is good that an attendance officer is employed to monitor attendance and that year heads follow up attendance and report on attendance at their weekly meetings. The measures in place for monitoring of attendance are good. However, the rate of absenteeism among students is very high. Currently the school does not have a whole-school attendance strategy. Tracking and analysis of attendance data is not undertaken. It is recommended that, in line with the requirements under participation in the DEIS programme, a whole school approach should be taken to improving attendance. It was also noted that the school had not returned the annual attendance data to the National Education and Welfare Board (NEWB) for the last two years.

Punctuality was observed to be a significant problem in the school. The front door area is supervised each morning. However, there is currently no-one on duty after the first lesson has begun. Although there is a recording system that requires students to sign a late slip and present it to their class teacher, it is evident that this is having a limited effect in improving punctuality. In addition, it was noted during the subject evaluations that students frequently turned up late for classes throughout the day. There is a need for a whole-school approach in addressing this problem.

The school is very closely linked with the neighbouring St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired. The centre was visited as part of the evaluation. Through the availability of a coffee shop, visually impaired students and their sighted friends are provided with a venue for

socialising at lunch times. This is actively encouraged by school staff and is evidence of the inclusive ethos of the school.

1.4 Management of resources

The school complies with the requirements of Circular Letter M22/95 with regard to providing twenty eight hours per week of instruction time. However, it was noted during the evaluation that the absence of a school bell results in a considerable amount of lost time at each change of class throughout the day. This situation needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The staffing allocation from the Department of Education and Science for the current school year 2009/10 is 40.62 whole-time equivalents (WTE). The school has two WTE teaching posts over quota. In addition there are seven full time special needs assistants (SNA). Teachers are deployed for the maximum number of class contact hours that their contracts allow. As well as its general allocation the school receives additional resources in respect of students with special educational needs and for participation in the DEIS programme. Although the school is entitled to apply for an allowance in respect of students whose first language is other than English the allowance was not applied for this current year. It is recommended that the teaching resources allowed by the Department of Education and Science be applied for in the next school year.

The school is entitled to a full time chaplain. This position has been vacant for a number of years. It is unclear why this position was not filled. It is recommended that the board of management addresses this as a matter of urgency.

The school holds an entitlement to the position of one full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator. The current HSCL co-ordinator also holds the position of year head to first years. This arrangement needs to be reviewed to avoid any conflict between the disciplinary function of the year head and the role of the HSCL co-ordinator in supporting students and their families. Furthermore, the role of the HSCL co-ordinator necessitates regular visits to students' homes and involvement in other activities away from the school. Consequently there are frequent occasions in the school week when the year head is not available when needed in the school to deal with issues that arise in first year. Therefore, the present arrangement compromises both the position of HSCL co-ordinator and that of year head to first year and needs to be reviewed. The review should take account of the guidelines for HSCL co-ordinators issued by the Department of Education and Science in 2007.

It is not school practice for subject departments to be assigned a set budget. Individual teachers make requests for resources as and when they are needed. Some subject departments are very well resourced, for example the English department; while in other subject departments the range of resources is more limited, for example SPHE. In order to allow school management to plan for resource provision it is recommended that an audit of resources be carried out by each subject department and that a formal system be established for applying for resources.

Specialist rooms for Art, Home Economics and Music are well resourced. The rooms designated for the provision of learning support are very well resourced and are well designed and provide a simulating learning environment for students. There are two rooms specifically assigned to visually impaired students. One of these comprises a Braille library and contains all of the school text books in Braille. The other room is an information and communications technology (ICT) based room which is divided into individual work stations where students can connect their laptops to a central printer system. This room also contains a 'smartboard'. This level of provision is very good.

Funding for upgrading the Materials Technology Wood room was received from the Department of Education and Science and this room is in very good condition. However, the Department grant for the upgrading of the metalwork room was not applied for, and consequentially it is in poor condition. The school library is used as a full-time classroom; this limits students' access to the library facilities. The school should explore ways to provide a library space that is more accessible.

The ICT facilities include two computer rooms, one of which contains a data projector. There is one computer and data projector in a room designated 'the media room'. There is also one computer in the behavioural support room. A mobile computer and data projector are available on a booking system. The school is participating in the '100 Mbps Project' in conjunction with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). Participation in this project will lead to an upgrading of the ICT resources in the school and will also provide the school with broadband internet access; this is a positive development. There is good availability of audio-visual equipment.

A safety, health and welfare at work policy is in place and a special duties post holder acts as the school's safety officer. In keeping with good practice, the policy statement was developed in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act of 2005 and was signed by the principal in January 2009. Continuing risk assessments are carried out. It is not clear however, what actions, if any, have been taken on foot of these risk assessments. For example a safety audit completed in 2007 recommended that a review be carried out on the machine-guarding standards on all equipment, that the use of the gym area as a canteen be reviewed, and that the fire exits in the old building be reviewed. In addition, the poor condition of the roof was identified as posing a possible safety risk. It was noted by the whole-school evaluation team that the safety guarding on some of the machines in the metalwork room do not meet safety regulations. Furthermore it was observed that one fire exit was blocked by a table and another door marked 'emergency exit' was locked. So far this year a fire drill has not been held. This means that although first year students have completed a training session in this area they have yet to experience a fire drill. It is essential that these health and safety issues are resolved immediately.

The flooring around the school building varies in quality. In some cases it is of a very high standard whereas in others it is poor. In parts damage to carpet has been repaired with tape which is now worn and poses a tripping hazard to students, particularly those who have a visual impairment. It is recommended that steps are taken to remedy this health and safety issue.

The facilities for Physical Education (PE) are limited. A dual purpose area is used as both PE hall and canteen. This hall also provides the only access route to the school's staff room. This situation is not satisfactory. PE lessons are subject to much interruption. It also means that students do not have tables to sit at to eat their lunch and while there are a number of benches situated on the edges of this area most students are obliged to eat their lunch while standing or sitting on the floor. While allowing for the restrictions in the layout of the school building, it is recommended that this arrangement be reviewed with a view to finding more appropriate recreational facilities for students.

An assistant principal post holder is currently the director of adult and community education in the school. In addition to the director there is one assistant principal post and two special duties posts provided for assistant co-ordinators. The night school is very successful and attracts large numbers of enrolments each term. The courses are chosen in response to community demand and some are accredited courses with qualifications awarded by the Further Education and Training

Awards Council (FETAC). Through the adult education courses the school maintains good links with the local community.

High standards of cleanliness are maintained throughout the school which is an indication of the very good work of the cleaning and caretaking staff. It is good that the walls of the corridors are used as a means of communicating with students and of celebrating significant events in school life; notice boards, student photographs and art works displayed around the school.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

The focus of school planning has been on the development of whole-school policies and on subject department planning. This is currently co-ordinated by the deputy principal. Some policies were developed through a process involving sub-committees which included representatives of the school partners. This good practice resulted in collaboration between staff, parents, and students. The planning process, however, has suffered from a lack of overarching direction in the form of a clear articulation of a shared vision. It is evident that there is a need for a whole-school sense of ownership of the planning process. It is recommended that this be developed.

A document outlining a brief description of the work of the school has been produced. However a school plan has not been developed. It is recommended that work begin on the development of a school plan as a matter of priority. Policy documents have been developed relating to various aspects of school life and there are subject department plans. Among these plans, there is a transition year plan, a special needs plan and a Leaving Certificate Applied plan. These policies and plans, when collated, should provide a good starting point for the school plan as a whole. The plan should be divided into a permanent section and a developmental section. Documents such as the mission statement and policy documents should form the basis of the permanent section. The developmental section should include all aspects of forward planning for the school.

In developing the school plan there should be an emphasis on action planning, where clearly defined objectives that reflect the school's overall aims, are set. Appropriate timeframes should be defined for the achievement of these objectives. The specific actions necessary should be identified along with identifying the staff members who will carry them out. Achievable targets should be set to facilitate review. There should be a whole-school approach to the development of the school plan. The school has in the past received direction and support with subject department planning and policy development from the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI). It is recommended that similar assistance be sought for the development of the school plan.

The guidance plan is in need of review and updating. A subject inspection of Guidance, carried out in 2008, recommended that further work be undertaken in developing the plan for Guidance. This work remains unfinished. It was noted in the whole-school evaluation, for example, that no critical incident policy is yet in place. It is recommended that the development of a critical incident policy should be a priority area of attention.

A very good TY plan has been developed. It includes a comprehensive outline of the aims and objectives of the programme, a calendar of events, the TY teaching team, class lists, programmes for the modules and subjects, and work experience details. In addition the modes of assessment and evaluation used in TY are included in the planning documentation. The plan also contains a student contract for learning. It is very good that appropriate teaching and learning approaches and links between subjects are contained within the planning documentation. In keeping with

very good planning practice the programme is evaluated by parents, teachers and students each year. It is evident that information from these evaluations is used to inform future planning for TY.

The quality of the LCA plan is good. The plan contains a programme overview and a description of the programme's provision. The types of methodologies used and approaches taken in the delivery of the programme are well outlined. It is clear that an integrated approach is taken, with Mathematics and Information Technology in particular featuring as an integral part of the other subject courses. This is in keeping with the core objectives of a good LCA programme.

While there is good work being done with JCSP students, a plan for the JCSP programme does not currently exist in the school. It is recommended that work begins on the development of the JCSP plan. This would contribute to the co-ordination of teachers' efforts to deliver the programme and would enable forward strategic planning to take place so that the provision can develop to meet the changing needs of JCSP students. The JCSP plan should also provide for the monitoring and tracking of student progress and achievement to enable the effectiveness of the programme to be measured.

There is currently no behaviour unit plan. The school needs to work on a plan for the development of this unit. This work should involve a whole-school effort. For example, each subject department represented in the unit should devise a set of teaching and learning plans for the subject. The methodologies recommended for the JCSP and LCA programmes would be very appropriate reference guides for this work. Planning for this unit should also focus on student re-integration, behaviour management and personal development.

In line with the requirements of participation in the DEIS programme the school should embark on the process of action planning and target setting in relation to the key areas covered by DEIS. Attendance, retention, student progress in literacy and numeracy, and student achievement in the certificate examinations should be subject to ongoing tracking and monitoring so that the effectiveness of interventions for improvements in these areas can be measured and evaluated. It is recommended that the school establishes a DEIS planning team to oversee this work and to develop a DEIS strategy for the school.

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 062/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Post-primary Schools* (Department of Education and Science, September 2004). A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines. However, it was evident that the child protection procedures have not been brought to the attention of all staff members. It is therefore recommended that all members of the school community receive the relevant training and that updates are provided on an annual basis. In addition, new teachers should be provided with a copy of the child protection guidelines.

3. QUALITY OF CURRICULUM PROVISION

3.1 Curriculum planning and organisation

The school provides a broad range of curricular programmes to meet the needs of the students. The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, the JCSP, the TY programme, the Established Leaving Certificate and the LCA. The school also offers a wide range of subjects within each curricular programme.

The core curriculum for junior cycle students comprises: English, Gaeilge, Mathematics, Religious Education (RE), History, Geography, Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE) and a choice of three subjects from, Home Economics, Music, Art, Craft and Design, Materials Technology (Wood), Science, Business Studies and French. Due to the declining enrolment in the school, this year has seen the removal of German from the list of options for first year students and Materials Technology (Wood) and Metalwork will now be offered on alternate years. It is good that students following JCSP are provided with the same range of subject choice as above with the exception of Economics and Social Studies (ESS) in place of History and Geography. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided to junior cycle students as part of the SPHE programme.

In the senior cycle students taking the Established Leaving Certificate study a core curriculum comprising English, Gaeilge, Mathematics, PE and RE. They also make a choice of four subjects from twelve optional subjects: French, German, History, Geography, Engineering, Construction Studies, Art, Home Economics, Biology, Physics, Business and Music. RSE is provided as part of the RE programme for senior cycle students.

The school's LCA programme offers students a broad educational experience. The vocational specialisms available are Engineering, Horticulture, Craft and Design, and Graphics and Construction. Students are also provided with the opportunity to study Music, Gaeilge, Italian, Social Education, and Leisure and Recreation. In addition, the electives offered are Science and Religious Education. ICT, Vocational Preparation and Guidance, English and Communications and Mathematical Applications are also studied and are integrated well across the other subjects. LCA students are out of school on work experience one day per week.

Transition year (TY) in Pobalscoil Rosmini is optional and there two class groups currently in TY. This represents very good uptake of TY and is an indication of the success of the programme. The programme offered is very good and TY students are exposed to a wide range of experiences. In addition to the core subjects studied in TY, students get the opportunity to take modules in a wide variety of additional subjects. These include: Japanese, Drama, Swimming, Heritage Studies, Media Studies, Driver's Education and Philosophy. The use of alternative methodologies and approaches is encouraged, in the school, in teaching and learning in TY. There is an extensive calendar of co-curricular events organised for TY, such as field trips, visits to galleries and exhibitions, a German exchange programme, and a trip to an outdoor education centre. In addition students can participate in a car maintenance course, the kayaking club, and the Gaisce awards programme among others. This programme is very much in keeping with the spirit of the TY programme.

The school is very careful to take students' preferences into account in the creation of option blocks. Students are provided with an open choice and the subject option blocks are established on the basis of student preference and hence change from year to year. A good range and a good balance have been achieved.

Timetable allocation for subjects is in line with the syllabus guidelines. However, timetable arrangements in some subject areas are in need of review. The priorities that guide the timetabling process should be established in advance and it is important that these are student-centred.

3.2 Arrangements for students' choice of subjects and programmes

Good efforts are made to provide students and their parents with timely and appropriate advice and information when making choices regarding programmes and subjects.

The deputy principal, the special needs co-ordinator and a small team of teachers visit the school's feeder primary schools each year to promote the school. An open night is held for prospective students and their parents to visit and become familiar with the school. An information night is held for the parents of incoming first years, where they receive information about the subject and programme options available in the school. Opportunities are provided for students with special educational needs to become familiar with the school environment before starting in first year. The '*Meitheal*' group, comprising senior students, provides significant assistance to first year students through their work in mentoring and supporting them. All of this is good practice in ensuring that the transition of students from primary to post-primary school takes place as smoothly as possible.

First year students experience all subjects over a three-week introductory period. This means that they are provided with an opportunity to sample the full range of subject options before making a final choice. While there is some value in providing students with an experience of all subjects, members of some subject departments felt that three weeks was too short a period of time to formulate a good idea of their subject. It is recommended that discussion around this issue takes place. The views of students, parents and subject teachers should be canvassed in reaching a decision on this matter.

It is good that in preparation for senior cycle, an information evening is held for students and their parents, to provide information on the range of programmes and subjects available for Leaving Certificate. However, it was evident in the evaluation that the criteria for admission to the LCA programme need to be discussed and reviewed to ensure that all students who would benefit from participation in the LCA programme have access to it. Care also needs to be taken that the JCSP programme is not perceived as a programme reserved for students with special educational needs, but rather as it was intended, to meet a wider set of needs.

3.3 Co-curricular and extracurricular provision

Students participate in a range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The availability of these activities relies heavily on the generosity, dedication and voluntary participation of teachers. The programme provides opportunities for students to participate in sporting, artistic, cultural, and social activities. All students have access to participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities. This reflects the inclusive ethos of the school.

Extracurricular activities available in the school include sports activities such as hurling, Gaelic football, camogie, soccer, badminton, and basketball. Lunch time activities that are available include table tennis, chess, film, reading, and music. A music session was visited during the evaluation and it was evident that the participating students derive great pleasure and enjoyment from performing for each other and from listening to each other. The school has a successful cycling club. This involves sighted and visually impaired students cycling on a local seafront area and beach. A substantial number of bicycles have been provided by the school for participating students. Athletics and cross country running are also strong activities in the school. Water sports such as kayaking have recently been added to the list of extracurricular activities provided for students. Judo classes form part of the PE programme for TY students and a Judo club is also

organised after school. There is much very good work going on outside of school time for students of the school.

Opportunities are provided for students to participate in a wide range of co-curricular activities. These include participation in educational trips abroad, drama, and mathematics quizzes. *Maths Week*, *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, and *Friendship Week* are celebrated as significant events in the life of the school. Visits to exhibitions and places of educational interest are also organised for students. Through participation in activities such as these, student experience of the curriculum is enhanced.

The President's Award, GAISCE, is well established in the school. Students complete a variety of personal challenges through participation in this programme. The annual sponsored walk and the raising of money for charity, through carol singing and the annual talent show, provide examples of these. Students also complete sport coaching courses and provide assistance in running school teams. Through participation in GAISCE students are involved in '*Log on and Learn*' computer training for the elderly. In addition students participate in the UNESCO peer education programme to highlight environmental issues. The educational and personal development of students of Pobalscoil Rosmini is enhanced and enriched by their participation in the extra-curricular and co-curricular programmes offered by the school.

4. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SUBJECTS

4.1 Planning and preparation

Subject department structures have been established. At the beginning of the school year time is allocated by school management to facilitate planning by individual departments. The effectiveness of this provision is not consistent across all subject areas, however. In two of the subjects inspected, the failure to achieve full attendance at subject department meetings was noted to have had a negative impact on the extent of collaborative planning that is taking place in those subject areas. It is recommended that when the schedule of meetings is being constructed particular attention should be paid to enabling teachers who teach more than one subject to attend those subject department meetings that are relevant to their work. A role description for subject co-ordinators should be agreed with senior management and documented in subject plans. Consideration should also be given to rotating the position of co-ordinator amongst team members.

In three of the five subjects evaluated, progress has been made on developing programme plans for teaching and learning. These set out information on the organisation of the departments and provide some detail on the content to be taught. The best of these plans contain a very good account of the teaching and learning programme set out on a monthly basis for the whole year for every year group and for every level. It is recommended that all subject department plans should be developed to include this information. It is also recommended that planning should include information on the development of students' knowledge, attitudes and skills, expressed as intended learning outcomes. Given that the student cohort represents a very wide range of learning abilities, it is further recommended that planning for all subject areas should reflect differentiated approaches in terms of content, teaching methodologies and assessment strategies.

At the time of the evaluation, subject department plans had not been sufficiently developed in some subject areas. Common agreed plans of work for each year group had not been worked out and there were no written programmes of work to facilitate programme delivery. This should be

addressed as a matter of priority. Inspectors noted that the planning documents presented by individual teachers would form a good starting point for this work. Advice and guidance on the development of subject plans is available from the website of the School Development Planning Initiative (www.sdpi.ie). It is clear that there is considerable expertise in developing collaborative subject plans available within the school. This will be hugely beneficial in advancing this important work.

4.2 Teaching and learning

The lessons observed were well structured and they had a clear sense of purpose. On occasion, in some subject areas, learning objectives were shared with students at the beginning of the lesson. This strategy proved very effective in setting the scene for the lesson and in assisting in the development of a logical lesson structure that was clearly focused on student learning. It is recommended that teachers make it their policy and practice to explicitly state the learning outcomes at the beginning of each lesson. This can increase motivation and bring a clearer focus to students' work. To enhance the formative-assessment potential of this strategy, students should be encouraged to review what they have learned by summing up some key aspects of learning within the lesson.

In many instances teaching and learning was facilitated by the successful integration of additional resources to support lesson delivery. These resources, which included the use of ICT, worksheets and visual materials, as well as the use of authentic texts to support language lessons served to engage students and to create a visually stimulating learning environment. There is scope to extend these approaches to cater for students' different learning styles and ability levels.

Lesson content was often linked to students' real-life experiences. This is very good as it supports understanding by increasing the relevance of the subject matter. In the various subject areas evaluated, teachers concentrated on supporting general literacy development. They need also to encourage greater use of the correct subject-specific terminology among students as a means of supporting deeper learning of the material under discussion. To support the teaching and learning of languages some very good practice in the use of authentic texts was noted and teachers' use of the target language was also good.

In some lessons the strategies employed by teachers were very effective in engaging all students. These included active learning approaches where students worked independently or in pairs. However in a number of lessons teacher-led activity dominated. It is recommended that teachers explore ways in which more student activities can be incorporated into class time to support learning. Differentiated challenges should be devised to support the range of student abilities evident in classrooms.

In all of the lessons observed teachers were affirming of students' efforts. Students displayed a sense of security in seeking additional clarification on lesson content. Very good classroom management was evident in almost all of the lessons observed. Teachers demonstrated high levels of confidence in the majority of lessons. This greatly assisted the effective management of the work. Best practice was evident in lessons where positive interactions were actively promoted and where classroom routines were consistently implemented in a composed and friendly manner.

Students made progress in all of the lessons observed. In a number of lessons the questioning strategies used allowed students to provide short answers which functioned to prompt further teacher input. In those lessons where classroom discussion worked best, students were expected

to extend their answers. It is recommended, therefore, that all teachers increase their use of probing questions to support the development of students' higher-order thinking skills.

The standard of maintenance and presentation of students' notebooks and folders was inconsistent across the classrooms visited. In some, comprehensive work was evident in student copybooks. In others, the organisation by students of different sections of their written work was poor, leading to disorganised notes that were unlikely to serve as effective revision aids. In a small number of lessons the absence of an agreed system for recording and storing class work resulted in students having no evidence of any written work previously completed. It is recommended that each subject department agrees procedures that will determine common expectations regarding how students should present and store their written work and that teachers communicate these consistently to their students.

4.3 Assessment

Formal summative examinations are held for all students at the end of the first term. Non-examination year groups also have summer examinations. Students preparing for the certificate examinations sit pre-certificate examinations in the second term. The good practice of administering common end-of-term examination papers, where appropriate, is in place. In planning for the assessment of students' proficiency in languages some very good practice in assessing students' oral skills was evident. This should be extended where relevant.

In TY students are assessed in some subject areas by means of project work. Some examples of excellent project work were noted in the course of the evaluation. The use of project work in assessment in TY is fully in keeping with the ethos of the TY programme.

Some good practice in the use of formative assessment strategies was evident in the subject areas evaluated. JCSP learning statements are well used. Student copybooks indicate good practice in the setting and monitoring of homework. Some teachers provide written feedback for students in line with the principles of assessment for learning (AfL). All subject departments are encouraged to investigate further AfL strategies and to introduce them to their classroom practices.

In the context of mixed-ability classes, it is recommended that consideration be given to setting differentiated tasks for homework and classwork. It is not always appropriate, or indeed desirable, to set the same task for a class group and students may respond well to having some choice regarding the level of challenge posed.

In some subject areas inconsistencies in assessment practice are apparent. The school does not currently have an assessment policy. It is recommended that work begin on the development of the school's overall assessment policy. This should then be used to inform the assessment policies of each subject department. The range of assessment modes used should be in keeping with the aims and objectives of relevant syllabuses. Since a minority of students do not complete homework assignments, attention should also be paid to determining agreed strategies for addressing the non-completion of homework.

Subject departments demonstrate some awareness of student outcomes in the certificate examinations. However there is scope to carry out a more in-depth analysis in comparing these outcomes against national norms while bearing in mind school context factors. It is recommended that each subject department carries out an annual audit of student achievement in the certificate examinations. This should enable positive trends to be identified along with issues that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

Some very good record-keeping and reporting procedures were noted during the evaluation. Best practice was evident where all information relating to students' assessments and assignments was stored systematically by the teacher.

5. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

5.1 Students with special educational needs

Good procedures are in place for identifying students who require learning support. There is good communication with parents and feeder primary schools. Students are also identified through psychological reports, communication with the psychological services, ongoing teacher observation and in-class testing. Pre-entry assessments are carried out. In addition, diagnostic testing was introduced for the present first-year students. The use of standardised tests to track students' progress from their pre-entry point should be considered. Analyses of these results would enable the effectiveness of the school's interventions to bring about student improvements in literacy and numeracy to be evaluated. It is important that the school complies of the requirement of participation in the DEIS programme that students' progress is tracked systematically.

The school invests extensive resources that the in the provision of learning support. Support is provided through individual or small group withdrawal, the creation of smaller class groups in the core subjects at junior cycle and team teaching. A new arrangement this year has meant that one third of first-year students have been allocated a place in a special support class group for English and Mathematics from the beginning of first year. A separate first-year class group comprises a small number of students who are on a reduced curriculum. These students join the special support class for English and Mathematics. Another first-year class group has been subdivided so that a small group, who are taught English and Mathematics at a slower pace, has been formed. The remaining students are placed in a mixed-ability class. As an innovative way of increasing the numeracy levels of these students, the school operates a 'Maths Buddy' system, whereby first-year JCSP students are paired with TY students for student-to-student support. The range and scope of these supports is evidence of the school's commitment to providing for the needs of its students.

The learning support initiatives that are planned for the coming year include; arts and crafts, 'literacy in the classroom', 'Maths laboratory', and hand-held gaming devices. Initiatives that took place in the current year include; 'Storyteller', 'Drop Everything and Read', mathematics games and reading challenge. This is a sample of the good work being done in this area.

Students, who are exempt from studying Irish, in the senior cycle, take Classical Studies as an alternative subject. This provision is currently under review. There are plans to discontinue this practice and to find an alternative option for such students.

Currently there are twenty-one teachers providing learning support for students. Co-ordination and management of a team of this size poses difficulties in the provision of learning support. In particular, the provision of continuity for students can be hard to achieve as individual students commonly have more than one learning support teacher. It is therefore recommended that in the coming school year consideration be given to reducing the size of the learning support team and to the creation of a core group.

Student records are securely maintained in a locked filing cabinet. Information about students with special educational needs is passed on only where necessary and with sensitivity. Liaison between the learning support department and mainstream teachers is good. The learning support co-ordinator can input into staff meetings and day-to-day communication also takes place.

Very good supports are provided for students who have visual impairments. There are twenty-six visually impaired students in the school and four resource teachers are assigned to them. Their work is co-ordinated by an experienced member of the teaching team. The organisation of Braille text books, handouts and examination material and the decoding of Braille homework assignments form a significant part of the co-ordinator's role. Teachers were reported to be very accommodating with respect to requests for this service and the facilitation of these processes. In keeping with good practice, the four resource teachers meet on a weekly basis. Pobalscoil Rosmini also acts as a resource to other schools in the provision for students with visual impairments.

Visually impaired students with are very well supported in the school by the resource teachers who are proactive in seeking alternative teaching and learning approaches to suit their particular needs. A transition programme is provided for visually impaired students; this occurs when students move from primary to post-primary school and also when they leave Pobalscoil Rosmini. There is a mobility trainer employed by the school to provide training on negotiating the physical environment; the school, the locality and further afield. Some of the visually impaired students are boarding in St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired others board with families living in the locality. It is part of the co-ordinator's role to liaise with the centre's childcare staff and with the host families. This involves weekly meetings to discuss students' progress. Special assistance is provided for students in subjects such as Mathematics where students are withdrawn to be taught by a teacher with expertise in teaching Mathematics to the visually impaired.

The school does not have a whole-school policy for inclusion in place. It is recommended that work begins on the development of an inclusion policy. This should include the involvement of all members of the school community. The Department of Education and Science guidelines on inclusion of students with special education needs will provide support for the school in the completion of this task.

5.2 Guidance and student support

The school has an allocation of one full ex-quota teacher for Guidance. The permanent holder of this position is, however, on long-term leave. A full-time guidance counsellor is temporarily employed in the school and the work of Guidance at the time of the evaluation was focused on the preparation of Leaving Certificate students for the filling out central applications office (CAO) forms for application to third level institutions. There is, however, very little provision in the areas of personal counselling for students. The school seeks the assistance of outside agencies to make up this shortfall but the situation is far from ideal.

The school maintains a strong link with the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) as part of its provision for Guidance. This involves the school working in conjunction with the ESB to provide a comprehensive programme of information provision and mentoring for students. Visiting speakers, site visits and work experience are features of this programme. This is a very valuable liaison for the school.

The care team comprises both members of the senior management team in addition to the three junior cycle year heads, the HSCL co-ordinator, the guidance counsellor, a member of the SPHE

teaching team, and the learning support co-ordinator. In keeping with good practice weekly meetings of the care team are held. Although it is possible for senior cycle year heads to join the meetings of the care team they are not represented on the team itself. It is suggested that consideration be given to the representation of senior cycle groups on the care team. The absence of a chaplain creates a significant gap on the care team.

The role of tutor is central to the care and discipline structures in the school, having both a pastoral and a management function. In keeping with good practice, tutors volunteer for this role. However, it is not always possible to timetable a tutor for any contact time with their tutor group. When this happens the effectiveness of the tutor is limited. It is recommended that tutors should be assigned only to a group with whom they have class contact time.

Senior students play an important caring role in the school through their involvement with the *Meitheal* group. Members of the *Meitheal* group mentor first year students and provide an alternative point of contact for first year students experiencing difficulty in settling in to school. Their work involves organising activities for first years and making regular formal contact with their first year group. This is very good practice as it benefits the first years and the members of the *Meitheal* group alike.

The school has a homework club in place. This was visited during the evaluation. It was noted that very few students avail of this service. The school should take a fresh look at this provision and investigate ways in which students could be actively encouraged to participate in the homework club. It is recommended that the school, as part of the development of an attendance strategy, gives consideration to the introduction of a breakfast club and to the development of after-school initiatives possibly in conjunction with the School Completion Programme (SCP) co-ordinator. General measures that are designed to make coming to school more attractive should also be considered. In addition the HSCL co-ordinator, the attendance officer and the year heads should work together in targeting students who regularly miss school for intervention.

The school acknowledged the valuable contribution of the Rosminian Fathers in the organisation of liturgical services throughout the year. The school is proud of the achievements of its students and opportunities are created to acknowledge these. Student photographs at different events are prominently placed in the entrance hall and in other areas of the school. A newsletter is produced to report on significant school events and to celebrate school achievement. The school's website also provides a valuable source of information. Annual awards ceremonies are used to encourage students and to recognise their achievements. In addition to academic achievement, awards are presented for student performance in Art, Music, sport and achievement in the JCSP programme; a practice which is very worthwhile. The school also has an annual graduation ceremony.

The school has good access to the services provided by National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and the NEWB. It is, however, very important that the school provide all of the necessary information to outside agencies to enable the school to derive full benefit from the outside supports available to them.

Through the HSCL co-ordinator the school has developed links with inter-agency services. One example is the Young people at Risk Initiative, which works with young people of Dublin's North Inner City. It is common practice for the school to refer students to outside services where necessary. Examples of these include 'family and teen counselling' services and St John's Education Centre in Glasnevin.

In general the relationships amongst staff and between students and staff are supportive and caring. The special needs assistants (SNA) were described as having a very important role in helping students to be actively involved in school life. The wider school community supports initiatives, such as ‘friendship week’.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- The rooms designated for the provision of learning support and those specifically assigned to visually impaired students are very well resourced and are well designed to provide a simulating learning environment.
- The school provides a broad range of curricular programmes to meet the needs of its student cohort.
- The school’s LCA programme is well planned and offers students a wide range of educational experiences.
- The school offers a sound, well-structured transition year (TY) programme which is in keeping with Departmental guidelines.
- The school takes students’ preferences into account in the creation of subject option blocks. A good range and a good balance of subject choices have been achieved.
- First year students are provided with the opportunity to experience all of the optional subjects in advance of making their final subject choices.
- The school provides a programme of extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities which cover sporting, artistic, cultural, and social activities. All students have access to participation in these activities.
- The lessons observed had a clear sense of purpose. In many, a variety of teaching and learning resources was integrated to support lesson delivery.
- All teachers demonstrated a commitment to supporting general literacy development.
- In TY, students are assessed in some subject areas by means of project work. Some examples of excellent project work were noted.
- Very good supports are provided for students who have visual impairments.
- The school is proud of the achievements of its students and opportunities are created to acknowledge these.
- The students contribute to the development of an inclusive and caring school environment through their involvement in the school’s *Meitheal* group. This is highly valued within the school.

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

- All members of the school community should work on developing a mission statement. It should reflect the school’s core values and should inform every aspect of school life.
- The board should take a more active role in ensuring the effective implementation of school policies after they have been developed. This will require the development of better lines of communication between the board and all members of the school community particularly students and the wider parent body.
- It is strongly recommended that the trustees become actively engaged, in collaboration with the board and with staff, in devising strategies to increase enrolment and to diversify the school population; the long-term viability of the school depends heavily on this.

- The principal and deputy principal should complete a comprehensive audit of their duties and, agree and establish accurate role definitions and descriptions. The main purpose of this should be to enable the senior management team exercise the leadership and management required to meet the challenges now facing the school.
- An audit of the needs of the school should be carried out and the schedule of posts of responsibility should be reviewed and revised in the light of this audit.
- It is strongly recommended that the school prioritises the management of student behaviour as an issue to be addressed on a whole-school basis as a matter of urgency.
- The purpose of the behaviour unit and the procedures relating to its running should be reviewed in accordance with the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) guidelines and immediate action should be taken to ensure good practice is being implemented.
- A whole-school approach to school development planning is required. There should be an emphasis on action planning where clearly defined objectives, that reflect the school's overall aims, are set.
- The board should ensure that all members of the school community receive training on the child protection guidelines and that updates be provided on an annual basis. All new teachers should be provided with a copy of the child protection guidelines.
- In order to meet the requirements of participation in the DEIS programme the school should embark on the process of action planning and target setting in relation to the key areas covered by DEIS. In particular, the effectiveness of the school's interventions in relation to improving students' standards in literacy and numeracy should be evaluated on an ongoing basis.
- In the coming school year consideration should be given to reducing the size of the learning support team and to the creation of a core group of teachers.

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 - 21 January 2010
- Subject Inspection of Gaeilge - 04 November 2009
- Subject Inspection of German - 02 April 2009
- Subject Inspection of Mathematics - 20 January 2010
- Subject Inspection of SPHE - 22 January 2010

Appendix

8. SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Trustees, Management, Board, and Staff of Pobalscoil Rosmini welcome the many positive comments contained in the Whole School Evaluation carried out in January 2010. In particular, the acknowledgments of the inclusive ethos of the school, its excellent Code of Discipline, the quality of teaching and other service provision are welcomed and reflect the reality of life at the school.

The description by parents of the school as a “welcoming, caring and inclusive community” as well as their acknowledgement of the commitment of the teachers was particularly gratifying. The inspectors noted that the lessons observed were well structured and they had a clear sense of purpose. The extensive co-curricular and extracurricular programmes are highlighted by the report as being reflective of the level of commitment of the staff and of tremendous value to the students. The Board is pleased that both the ICT facilities and the Night School were praised, as was the hard work of the maintenance staff. The Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied programmes were also commended.

That being said, the report highlighted a number of areas that required urgent attention. The following list of actions, undertaken on behalf of the Board of Management, indicate that the recommendations and observations either have already been addressed or are in the process of being dealt with and will, hopefully, be fully addressed by the end of the calendar year.

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

- A mission statement will be ratified at the October 2010 meeting of the Board of Management.
- The Board recognises and welcomes the diverse student profile in the school. Such diversity brings its own challenges. The Board has engaged with the staff in addressing these challenges and has engaged an external educational consultant to assist with this process.
- A number of steps have been taken to ensure that the school works with its entire community to ensure that a “shared vision” for the development of the school is both understood and implemented. The Board has established a School Improvement Planning Group which includes the external educational consultant, a member of the Board, the principal and the newly appointed deputy principal. This Group has been given the responsibility to manage the change in the school.
- The School Improvement Planning Group has been tasked by the Board to examine issues of whole school management with the Principal and Deputy Principal and to report to the Board by December 2010.
- In line with other recommendations the Student Council has been re-established and is now consulted regularly. It has met three times since April 2010.
- The Parents’ Association now has a notice section on the school’s website page and it is envisaged that any further space required will be provided.
- Meetings have taken place in May and September of this year with staff in relation to the implementation of the Code of Discipline in detail. The code is described by the inspectors as excellent. Responsibility for the effective management of the code has been assigned to the Principal and Deputy Principal.

- Senior management (Principal and Deputy Principal) meet on a daily basis in addition to two formally recorded meetings held on Monday and Thursday each week.
- The division of senior management duties is presently being audited to identify the agreed definitions of roles and responsibilities have been identified. The outcome of that review is to be formally ratified at the October 2010 Board meeting.
- An audit and review of posts of responsibility has commenced in line with the relevant Department of Education and Skills circulars. It is expected that this will be completed by December 2010 and implemented before the end of the year.
- Students now also participate in weekly group assemblies to facilitate the dissemination of relevant information. Change of class times are notified by bell. A communications system will form part of the building renovations scheduled for completion by January 2011.
- A minority of students account for the greater number of suspensions in a given year, therefore for the majority of the school population, suspensions are actually very low.
- The Board of Management recognises the efforts made by the Principal and staff to meet the needs of a small number of students with behavioural difficulties in the school. The Board has asked the Principal to apply to the NBSS for appropriate resources to support that effort. In the meantime the Board has asked that the unit currently operating in the school complies fully with best practice guidelines as outlined by NBSS.
- A text messaging system for notifying parents of attendance lapses has been put in place. Student attendance is tracked daily by the attendance monitor and weekly at a middle management meeting. In addition to the return of annual attendance data, the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) is electronically notified of student absences in excess of 20 days.
- A revised system to improve punctuality was put in place in September 2010. Students who arrive late to school or class without due cause will incur a sanction. The supervision of the school entrance area for 40 minutes each morning reinforces the importance of punctuality.
- Application for teacher allocation for students whose first language is other than English has been made to the DES for those who joined the school in September 2010.
- A school chaplain was appointed in May 2010.
- The Board of Management reviewed the role of Home School Community Liaison Officer (HSCL) and Year Head and determined that it is in accordance with the relevant Department of Education and Skills circular letter and that the demands of both functions are being met.
- An audit of subject department resources will take place early in 2010/11 with a view to creating a transparent and agreed mechanism for accessing school resources.
- An application to upgrade the equipment in the metalwork room is being prepared.
- Following a review of resources it was determined that currently it was not possible to set aside a dedicated library space.
- An application for funding to repair the school roof will be made under the 2011 Summer Works Scheme as soon as the necessary forms are issued by the Department of Education and Skills.

- Following a review in January 2010 school fire drills now take place each and every term.
- Carpets in need of repair were replaced in August 2010. A consultant is assessing the potential risk factors associated with health and safety within the building.
- 6 benches were installed in the school yard in August 2010 following a review of recreational facilities for students. The use of additional folding chairs are available when the canteen is operating to provide additional seating during break times.
- The existing planning documents within the school will be compiled into a comprehensive school plan and this will be completed in the current school year.
- Staff were given an update on the current DES child protection guidelines at an in-service (training day) in September 2010. This is to ensure that all staff are entirely clear as to their role and responsibilities in ensuring that a safe and healthy environment is created and maintained in the school.
- A review of the timetable allocation of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) took place in April 2010.
- A formal DEIS plan will be produced in 2010/11.
- Criteria for entry to LCA were reviewed in March 2010.
- Subject planning meetings took place in September 2010. State examination results were analysed and a plan of action to consolidate excellent results was initiated.
- It is intended to reduce the size of the core team working on the learning support team by the end of 2011.
- The homework club will continue. A group has been set up to examine the implementation of a breakfast club.