

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole-School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Newbridge College**  
**Newbridge, County Kildare**  
**Roll number: 61680T**

**Date of inspection: 25 November 2010**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F**  
**O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N**  
**A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

## **WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION**

A whole-school evaluation of Newbridge College was undertaken in November 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the quality of teaching and learning in five subjects was evaluated in detail, and separate reports are available on these subjects. (See section 7 for details).

### **INTRODUCTION**

Newbridge College was established by the Dominican Fathers as a boarding school for boys in 1852, a provision that was maintained until 2002. The school continues to operate under the trusteeship of the Dominican Fathers. In the 1980s it was decided to open the school to girls. In a relatively short period of time, Newbridge College became a truly co-educational school and the trustees and the school community actively support this development. This is reflected in the equal intake of boys and girls in first year and the continuing strides made in ensuring provision, both academic and extra-curricular, to meet the needs of both boys and girls. The phasing out of the boarding provision facilitated the process of considerable refurbishment work in recent years. This development allowed the augmentation of school accommodation in terms of classrooms and offices, and a steady increase in the number of students enrolled in the school. The school continues to offer day-boarding facilities for students, a service that has proven very popular with students and parents.

Newbridge College is located in the town of Newbridge. Given its original position as a boarding school, and as reflected in intake, the school has an extensive catchment area, including the town of Newbridge and its environs.

At the time of this evaluation the school principal was on sick leave. The deputy principal was fulfilling the role of acting principal and an assistant principal was in the role of acting deputy principal. Both are long-established members of staff and commenced their acting roles as a senior management team in autumn 2009. 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.

## **1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

### **1.1 Characteristic spirit of the school**

As a Dominican school, Newbridge College recognises that each student is unique and is valued. In line with the Dominican tradition, the school promotes an ethos and philosophy which prepares young people to consider the true worth of things, to value good and to approach participation in society with generosity and a capacity to think critically. In addition, an appreciation of art and music is encouraged.

The characteristic spirit of the school was strongly in evidence in many facets of school life, including interactions with parents, students and teachers, and in policy documents presented during the course of the evaluation. Students displayed a very strong work ethic and a strong sense of belonging to a community, one to which they were very loyal, were very proud of and in which they were very happy.

The governors, and in particular the religious representatives, are clear in their role in ensuring that the school ethos and philosophy are maintained. It is clear that all partners share a vision for Newbridge College as a centre for learning for all and a school community from which the young people who emerge can cope with, and be a positive influence on, society. It was evident in a number of meetings with stakeholders that the school continues to be part of students' lives long after they leave. The Newbridge College Union of past-pupils is one example of this.

## **1.2 School ownership and management**

The school is managed by a board of governors (the board) which was established in 1984. The board is representative of the trustees, parents, teachers and the past-pupils' union. The Provincial of the Order nominates a chairperson at the beginning of each school year. The board is supported in its work in governing the school by a clearly articulated and very comprehensive constitution. It is worth noting that the constitution provides for the formation of a number of committees representing key areas of the school's functioning, such as the personnel committee, the academic committee, the administrative and pastoral care committee and the discipline policy committee. Decisions, in accordance with the constitution, are reached by way of vote. While it is commendable that all school partners are represented on the board, membership is balanced in favour of those who represent the trustees and is predominantly male. It is recommended that the trustees revisit the constitution in order to ensure that the board's formation is in keeping with the Education Act (1998).

The board demonstrated a good understanding of its functions and obligations. Minutes of board meetings provide evidence that the board is aware of its statutory obligations and its role in leading school development planning. Parents and students have limited involvement in the development of school policies. While all school policies have been ratified by the board, they are not dated. Developmental priorities have been identified but no strategic plan has been put in place to guide their achievement. In order to develop a cycle of review, it is recommended that policy documents include a date of ratification, a date for review, and details of those with responsibility for their development, implementation and review. In assisting this process, it is recommended that an action plan be developed to progress areas identified as priorities.

## **1.3 In-school management**

The senior management team, comprising the acting principal and acting deputy principal, work very well together, have clearly shared their duties, and provide the school with proactive leadership on a day-to-day basis. While in an acting capacity, they are very much aware of the need to continue and progress school development and have taken appropriate steps to facilitate this in consultation with the board and with school staff, particularly since the beginning of this school year. Senior management is in regular communication throughout the school day, including a formal meeting each morning before the commencement of the school timetable. Their shared articulated vision for the school espouses the provision of a holistic education which instils confidence in all students and forms young people who recognise and value truth and honesty — leaders for the future. To support the senior management team in the short to medium term, it is imperative that the board make the necessary arrangements to provide them with an interim school plan to guide their work and to assist them in moving the school forward in its development as a centre for learning.

There is scope for more clearly defined leadership roles at middle management level. In 2008, work commenced on the review of posts and the duties assigned. The senior management team and members of the middle management team recognise that it is urgent

that the review process be concluded in order to advance school development. Currently, post duties are heavily weighted towards student management, examinations and subject department co-ordination. Meetings which take place between senior management and individual post-holders to discuss duties are largely ad-hoc and no schedule of formal team meetings is in place. It is recommended that the review take account of the need to decouple subject department co-ordination from the posts structure. It is also recommended that senior management plan for meetings between post holders and senior management, both as individuals and as members of teams, in order to define the middle management role and facilitate the regular monitoring and review of capacity and duties to serve the needs of the school. It is also recommended that a skills audit be conducted in order to establish and reflect staff skills and self-directed professional development to inform future continuing professional development (CPD) plans.

Communication between senior management and staff is very good. Very good efforts are made to ensure that staff members are at all times aware of school activities. Staff meetings are held regularly and staff members are invited to contribute items to the agenda. In addition to reports of board meetings and minutes of staff meetings, a daily newsletter issues each morning. Staff is also provided with a comprehensive staff handbook at the commencement of each school year, a resource that proves very useful to all, and in particular new staff members. Senior management and the board actively promote and support teachers' participation in CPD and, in addition to participation in in-service training provided by the Department of Education and Skills, a number of staff are engaged in postgraduate studies. It is recommended that senior management access professional development opportunities in the area of leadership in order to develop its capacity to lead learning.

A number of appropriate structures are in place to enable the effective management of students in a positive learning environment. These include a year head and class tutor system and the school journal. It is recommended that senior management explore the possibility of holding meetings with the year-head team at regular intervals. The school's code of behaviour is under review to ensure it is in keeping with the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines. Student attendance and retention is very good. Where relevant, reports on student attendance are furnished to the NEWB.

The student council, which was first introduced to the school in 2006, is representative of all year groups. Section 5 of this report provides more detail of the council's activities.

It is noteworthy that the school's admissions policy is entitled "Admissions and Participation Policy." This reflects management's commitment to promoting participation in the Newbridge College, a community in which the students are supported in learning to become active members of society. However, there appears to be a number of different versions of this particular policy in circulation. It is imperative that the board establish the live version of the policy and communicate this to the school community. Furthermore, two areas of the policy are in particular need of attention. These relate to the clause regarding the admission of students with special educational needs. In addition, the reference to a cap on intake in first year in literature disseminated at open night and its omission from the policy document needs to be regularised.

In the capacity of secretary to the board, the principal reports to the parents' association. All parents are automatically members of the parents association and officers are elected at the AGM. The current officers expressed a clear understanding of their role in the management of the school and expressed a strong desire for greater involvement in order that the association could fulfil its role. It was evident that school management values parents' support and in particular their contributions to Transition Year (TY), interview activities pertaining to various programmes offered, and co-curricular and extra-curricular

activities. The acting principal attends meetings and facilitates two-way communication between the association and the board of management.

The school has efficient systems in place to ensure clear and prompt communication between parents and members of the senior management team and teaching staff. Parent-teacher meetings are held for all year groups and parents' access to teachers is very good. Other means of regular communication between the school and its community include the school newsletter, e-mail, the issuing of regular reports on students' progress, and the continuing development of the school web site, which aims to maximise its use by all partners.

Newbridge College enjoys very good and long-established links with the community and outside agencies. Contacts are utilised to support and enhance student' learning experience and to support the school in implementing the programmes offered and activities undertaken.

As is evident at a number of different levels, including board and subject department level, the school is in the initial stages of developing a culture of self-review. The review of the posts of responsibility is the first major step taken in this regard. The priority areas for development identified indicate a strong and appropriate focus on the improvement of student outcomes to enhance the already very good levels achieved.

#### **1.4 Management of resources**

While the school is open for the required number of days, the time available for instruction is not in compliance with the terms of Department Circular M29/95 Time in School. In addition, other timetabling and calendar arrangements, such as the staggered introduction of year groups at the beginning of the school year and the inclusion of assembly periods on the timetable, contribute to further erosion of tuition time. It is strongly recommended that the board review current practice and make the necessary changes to ensure the terms of the circular are adhered to in the case of all students.

The school staff is strongly committed to the school and its students and is conscientious and professional. A comprehensive induction programme is provided for teachers who are new to the school and for Postgraduate Diploma in Education students. In addition, and to support the staff's commitment to improving learning, a Good Teaching Initiative (GTI) has been launched. Through this initiative staff members are circulated with 'good practice tips' at the beginning of each school week, and reaction has been very positive.

Almost all subjects and programmes are adequately resourced in terms of staffing and time allocation. Physical Education (PE) is currently limited to students in junior cycle and in TY. It is recommended that students in fifth year and sixth year also be given access to PE. Teaching staff is, for the most part, deployed in line with qualifications. In assisting planning for future staffing needs, it is recommended that a CPD programme policy be established to address areas of need such as qualified personnel in the area of learning support.

Administrative and support staff, including ancillary staff, make a significant contribution to the functioning of the school and is much valued by school partners.

The maintenance of school accommodation is of a very good standard. As part of the refurbishment works referred to earlier, the building has been adapted to include a pleasant, bright, and spacious social area for students. Subject departments are very well resourced.

Significant strides have been made in extending ICT infrastructure and resources to classrooms. Very good use is made of the ICT resources available to enable communication and as a tool to aid teachers in their work. It is commendable that e-learning is part of the school's plan to improve learning. Students are required to sign an acceptable user policy. It is recommended that this requirement be extended to all who are afforded access to the school's ICT facilities.

The health and safety statement is of a good standard and is current. A health and safety officer is nominated and, in keeping with best practice, the statement has been signed by all staff.

There is evidence of responsibility with regard to environmental issues and steps have been taken to improve recycling systems. To support these efforts and help reduce waste in the students' social area, consideration should be given to the initiation of the Green School Programme.

## **2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING**

### **2.1 The school plan**

While recent factors, both internal and external to the school, have impacted negatively on progress in the school development planning (SDP) process, the school has reached a good level in this area. Key policies have been developed in line with legislative and school needs and reviewed accordingly. At present, there is no school planning co-ordinator. It is recommended that, resources permitting, the post of school planning co-ordinator be reinstated. School management and staff are aware of the need to reinvigorate the process and are committed to planning strategically for the benefit of the future development of the school. There is a school planning team, which has considerable relevant experience. The team comprises the senior management team and the two other members of staff, one of whom holds a formal qualification in SDP. One member of this team formerly held the post of SDP co-ordinator.

Practice to date in relation to the development of policies has been very good, where sub-committees have been established to develop and review policies and where drafts were circulated to all partners, including students and parents, for comment prior to ratification by the board.

While there is no single document which sets out an overarching school plan with a timeframe for implementation, the constituent elements of such a plan were presented during the evaluation. Mandatory policies have been developed, priority areas for development have been identified and curricular plans are in place. Under the leadership of the board the previously developed strategic plan has been updated and is now presented as a staff plan. This document provides evidence of the very methodical process engaged in during its formulation and the thorough reflection and review engaged in with regard to the workings of the school and the identification of its strengths and areas for development. Priority areas identified for development support the maintenance of traditions and strengths in the school and have the enhancement of student learning at their core. The document provides an appropriate and balanced focus on the academic development of students and their pastoral support.

It is recommended that an overarching school plan be compiled, to include a realistic time-bound action plan to guide and progress the development of the priority areas identified. It is further recommended that a cycle of review be incorporated into the policy development process in order to establish structures and procedures to implement monitor and review

policies. The action plans should be used as tools to further develop the school's capacity for self-review and in this context a progress report should be furnished to the school community at regular intervals during the period of the plan. As part of this process, and with particular reference to curriculum, findings and recommendations identified in individual subject inspection and other evaluation reports issued to the school should be reviewed with a view to identifying cross-curricular areas for development and extend good practice. The school plan should be considered and adopted by each board at the beginning of its term.

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

### **3. QUALITY OF CURRICULUM PROVISION**

#### **3.1 Curriculum planning and organisation**

The curriculum offered in Newbridge College reflects constant review and evaluation of the curriculum's appropriateness in serving the needs and interests of the students. In addition to the established programmes, the school offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the TY. The range of subjects offered in both cycles represents a good balance between academic and practical subjects. In addition to the subjects on the formal timetable, the school also provides Applied Mathematics, Religious Education and Agricultural Science to students in senior cycle.

Evidence was provided that there has been a steady increase in the number of students taking LCVP and TY. However, the co-ordinator and management need to take account of best practice and requirements in the case of these programmes. Where TY is concerned, the work experience model currently operating is not in keeping with best practice and should be for the duration of no more than two two-week blocks. The timetabling provision for LCVP Link Modules is not in keeping with the guidelines and the modern language component is not part of the formal school timetable. Content plans for both programmes, and TY in particular, need to be reviewed so that intended learning outcomes are clearly articulated, that teaching and learning methodologies, including assessment modes, are detailed, and that individual modules and subject plans are more detailed and more uniform in their presentation.

The time allocation for a number of subjects in junior cycle is poor and is in need of review. These include Irish, English, History and Geography.

#### **3.2 Arrangements for students' choice of subjects and programmes**

The range of programmes and subjects offered is appropriate to the needs of the students. Study in the first year in junior cycle entails a taster programme along with core subjects, allowing students make more informed choices when selecting option subjects at the end of the year. At that point students are presented with three subject groupings from which to select preferences. The formulation of the initial groupings is based on previous experience and trends in subject uptake. The students' choices and the subject groupings are further refined to ensure maximum match prior to the timetable being set. A similar process

operates when students are deciding on option subjects for Leaving Certificate. It is recommended that as a first step in the subject selection process, students be surveyed in order to identify their top choices, free of any influence from set subject groupings and that the results, along with available resources, be used to devise the options bands.

Parents are involved in their children's subject choices from an early stage. Consultation with parents, information provided and access to the school's guidance service is very good, is current and is provided in a timely manner.

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

In line with the school's commitment to the holistic development of the students, a very good range of high quality co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is available to support and complement student learning. The work and commitment of staff in this aspect of provision is acknowledged. Rugby is the dominant sport identified with Newbridge College, a sport in which the school has experienced considerable success. Management and staff are aware and are consciously working towards ensuring equal status between the sports participated in by males and females. Hockey is becoming established as the predominant team sport for girls.

A wide range of individual and team sports is provided. Ample playing pitches are available and plans are in place to provide astro-turf facilities, which will extend and provide access to the playing areas available throughout the school year. Other sports include athletics, basketball and badminton. The majority of games are held on Wednesday afternoons, outside of school hours.

The school stages a musical annually. This is a considerable undertaking, which is strongly supported by the wider school community and adds to the variety of activities and opportunities available to students to develop and display talents and skills outside the classroom.

A comprehensive programme of co-curricular activities is provided for students in all year groups. Most notable are the school's debating teams in each language offered, Young Scientist, Maths Week, choirs, quizzes, language exchanges and school tours. School tours to European countries have a particularly high profile and are supported by a school policy.

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

### **4.1 Planning and preparation**

Subject department planning is an integral part of teachers' work and is well advanced in the school. In almost all instances, it was evident that subject teams engage in a very good level of collaborative planning. Minutes of subject department meetings indicate that time is used to discuss, among other things, the development of common plans for the delivery of syllabus content and for assessment. It is recommended that subject departments also take advantage of meeting time to share and discuss effective strategies for teaching and learning, and, in particular, approaches that support differentiation and active learning.

Each subject inspected has a subject plan. These plans are detailed, but are mainly content-focused. In revising subject plans, curricular content should be expressed in terms of learning outcomes, and the plans should include detail regarding teaching methods and resources, and should specify how the learning outcomes are to be assessed.

Inspectors commented positively on the good work being done by subject co-ordinators. In reviewing their role, account should be taken of how co-ordinators can lead curriculum development and innovation, with a view to improving teaching and learning. In the light of the recommendation above that the role of subject co-ordinator be de-coupled from the school's posts structure, it is also desirable that responsibility for co-ordination be shared among department members.

In general, subject areas are well resourced and resources are made available as needed. Planning for the integration of ICT into the teaching and learning processes is well developed across a range of subjects.

Planning and preparation for individual lessons was of a very good standard in almost all instances, and exemplary in a number of instances.

## **4.2 Learning and teaching**

The quality of teaching and learning was, in the majority of cases, very good. The lessons were well planned and catered for the range of students' abilities. Good planning was evidenced in the structure and pace of the lessons, in the variety of learning opportunities afforded to the students and in the practice of sharing the learning outcomes with students at the outset of the lessons. In some instances, the learning outcomes were written on the board. This very good practice should be adopted as standard across the school.

Classroom management and students' behaviour were very good. The lessons were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and very good student-teacher rapport. Students' engagement in the lessons was promoted by skilful questioning, seen to best effect when used to check students' progress against stated learning outcomes and to encourage speculation and independent thinking.

An appropriate range of teaching methods was in evidence in most cases. A very good balance was achieved between student-centred and teacher-led activities, and students were provided with opportunities for independent and collaborative learning. In some instances, however, there was too much reliance on teacher exposition at the board, and opportunities for independent learning, group work and pair work were not exploited.

ICT was effectively integrated into lesson delivery in many of the classes visited during the inspection. In order to promote greater use of the school's ICT resources, the process of storing them in electronic format on the school's local area network should be accelerated.

In almost all cases, care was taken to ensure that all students, irrespective of ability, were able to participate fully in lessons. Teachers made good use, for example, of graduated worksheets and differentiated questioning to support students who found the lesson content difficult, while challenging those who were more able.

The quality of student learning was good, and in some instances it was of a very high standard. The students demonstrated good understanding of key concepts, had mastered a range of skills and carried out their assigned work in a competent manner. It was evident from the students' notebooks and copybooks that the quality of their written work was also of a good standard.

## **4.3 Assessment**

There is a school homework policy, which is implemented by all departments and consistently applied by most teachers. In the case of Mathematics, additional homework guidelines detailing criteria for success have been developed by the department and have

proved effective. In some instances teachers give regular written feedback to students in line with the principles of assessment for learning (AfL). This good practice should be adopted as standard throughout the school, and the school's homework policy be revised to include a reference to the frequent monitoring of homework in line with AfL.

Good assessment practices are in place in the school. Students' progress is regularly assessed and frequent testing is the norm. Common examinations are set in most subjects. Project work is used as an assessment mode in some subjects. Students sitting certificate examinations are well-prepared, and the outcomes are mostly good. Analysis of certificate examination results is undertaken by subject departments and used to inform department planning. The practice of drafting a commentary on examination outcomes should be extended to all subject areas, and the commentaries should be included in the planning documentation. The school's academic committee should take a lead role in this area.

Reports issue to parents twice a year and the school also communicates with students' homes through the use of the student diary, parent-teacher meetings and other less formal means.

## **5. QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

### **5.1 Inclusion of students with additional educational needs**

Resources provided by the Department to support inclusion and students with additional educational needs are fully utilised and relevant documentation is clear and detailed. The school's comprehensive enrolment process facilitates the identification of students with additional educational needs. The learning support team, in collaboration with the guidance department, reasonable accommodation co-ordinator and senior management, plan and access appropriate resources for students in line with their requirements throughout their period of study in the school. Links have been established with relevant agencies and support networks.

The learning support team consists of three members of staff, none of whom hold a permanent position in the school. The only member of permanent staff with relevant qualifications in the area is currently on leave. One member of the current team is in the first year of teaching. It is a positive development that, with the support of management, two members of the team are pursuing post-graduate studies in this area. It is also indicative of management's commitment to affording best provision to all students. A large number of other members of the teaching staff work with the learning support unit to deliver tuition in Mathematics and English as needs require. This support is predominantly provided in one-to-one or small group settings. Some progress has been made with regard to the introduction of team teaching. The learning support team is clear on the benefits of such an approach and is keen to extend the use of this model. It is recommended that management consider reducing the number of staff involved in delivering tuition in this area in favour of the development of deeper knowledge of the needs and supports among a core team and that it encourage the team-teaching approach.

Individual learning progress is closely monitored and individual learning plans have been devised. This is very good practice. Communication with parents is regular and they are viewed as partners in progressing their children's learning.

The learning support team and management recognise, and have identified as a priority, the need to address the needs of exceptionally able students across the curriculum. Consultation with the NCCA and CEA publication *Exceptionally Able Students: draft guidelines for teachers* is recommended in the context of this work.

An end of year event is hosted to recognise and celebrate students' participation and achievement in the school.

## **5.2 Guidance and student support in the whole-school context**

Access to educational, personal and vocational guidance, and a counselling service, for all students is very good. Those involved in delivering Guidance and counselling services are fully qualified. One member of the team does not access supervision. It is recommended that management ensure that all members of the team involved in counselling access supervision to support them in their role. The Department's Guidance allocation is fully utilised and the school augments provision where necessary. The Guidance planning team includes a member of the Social, Personal and Health Education team.

The Guidance plan is of very good quality and co-ordination of the department's work is very effective. As the plan demonstrates, a whole-school approach to the implementation of the Guidance plan is adopted. The plan details a schedule of delivery, links with student care teams and key whole-school policies that support its implementation. As appropriate, and to synchronise input with elements of relevant subjects and programmes, access to whole-class Guidance is achieved through Social, Personal and Health Education, Religious Education and other negotiated classes, particularly in the case of third year. LCVP and timetabled career classes facilitate whole-school access in senior cycle.

Along with timetabled access, students are afforded individual Guidance appointments. In junior cycle all first year students are met individually, and as early as practicable. It is a feature of particular strength that students in second year are also allocated individual appointments to meet a Guidance Counsellor.

Relevant and detailed information on subjects and programmes is provided for students and parents at appropriate times during their course of study in the school. The psychometric tests used to support student learning are as recommended.

A very active and effective multidisciplinary student care team is in place and includes the school's matron. The school offers an excellent school transfer programme for first-year students. This entails an orientation week prior to the beginning of the school year. Crisis response and Relationships and Sexuality Education policies have been developed.

In keeping with the school's ethos, students are provided with leadership opportunities as members of the school community. This features the long established and prestigious prefect system, which management and staff consider very effective in assisting them in caring for students.

The student council is active and is representative of all year groups. Elections are democratic and a liaison teacher guides the students when necessary. Council members cited improved communications with the student body through the installation of an electronic screen in the social area, and the provision of additional recreational facilities among its achievements. In order for the council to achieve its true potential, it is recommended that its constitution be revisited in order to remove stipulations which prevent it from discussing matters which impact on student life on a day-to-day basis.

## **6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- Students displayed a very strong work ethic and a strong sense of belonging to a community, one to which they were proud to belong.
- All partners are committed to living out the school's mission statement.
- The quality of teaching and learning was, in the majority of cases, very good.
- Teaching staff are conscientious, and professional.
- There is evidence of very good practice at a number of levels.
- The school provides a very good range of high quality co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for students.

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

- Issues of compliance in the areas of time in school, and the provision of TY and LCVP need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- The board of governors should provide senior management and staff with an interim school plan.
- An overarching school plan should be compiled, to include a realistic time-bound action plan to guide and progress the development of the priority areas identified.
- Future plans to further school development and the focus on learning, and the sharing of best practice and experience already available in the school should be actioned.

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 Business – 23 November 2010
- Subject Inspection of Geography – 15 November 2010
- Subject Inspection of History – 24 November 2010
- Subject Inspection of Mathematics – 12 October 2010
- Subject Inspection of Science/Physics – 23 November 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 Board appreciates the recommendations for further improving student outcomes and the affirmation of what is currently being done in Newbridge College, most particularly: the commitment to uniquely valuing each student, the strong work ethic of students, the shared vision of Newbridge as a ‘school community from which the young people who emerge can cope with, and be a positive influence on society’, the way the curriculum focuses on serving the needs and interests of the students and reflects a good balance between academic and practical subjects, and the ‘good range of high-quality co-curricular and extra-curricular activities’.
- The Board feels the College is compliant with M29/95. All students are time-tabled for 28 each week and assembly periods address pastoral, academic and guidance matters and are essential to improving student outcomes; they minimise disruptions to tuition time. Similarly. The staggered return to school in September is absolutely limited to what is required to ensure that students settle in to school as quickly as possible, thus minimising disruption to tuition time.
- The TY work experience programme amounts to good practice as it provides students with opportunities, in three different career areas, to gain real insight into careers of interest to them, thus informing subject and career choice and their understanding of the world of work. Most students find this of particular benefit to them.
- The time-tabling provision for the link modules is determined by student availability and the focus is on developing independent learners. Students needing further tuition time to achieve their learning outcomes are facilitated. The modern language component is timetabled.
- Subject choice groupings were only used to structure discussions with students. Students are now first surveyed, free of any subject groupings influence.

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

- Work has commenced on a new strategic plan and a time-framed action plan. This will involve all stakeholders and self-evaluation will inform the work.
- School Policies are being reviewed and this will entail the inclusion of ratification and review dates.
- The review of posts and their duties has been completed and subject coordination has been decoupled from them.
- The post of school planning co-ordinator is reinstated, a skills audit is being undertaken to inform CPD and a schedule of meetings between management and post holders is in place. CPD in relation to learning support is also being addressed.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal (appointed 1 September 2012) are involved in and committed to on-going professional development.
- The admission policy is being revised.
- The feasibility of providing PE for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years not involved with physical activity within the school will be explored. A large proportion of students are involved with after-school sport four days a week.
- All using ICT system will be required to sign an 'acceptable user policy' and involvement with the Green Schools' programme will be reviewed.
- The College is considering the development of a teaching/learning policy in the context subject plans focussing on learning outcomes, the differentiation of teaching and active learning. Assessment for learning will be integral to this as will the electronic storage of learning resources – a process already commenced.
- The matter of preparing commentaries on examination outcomes is being referred to the Academic Committee.
- The whole matter of learning support will be reviewed in the context of the school plan.