

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

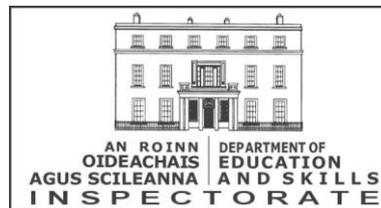
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Monaghan Collegiate School,
Corlatt, County Monaghan
Roll number: 64830E**

Date of inspection: 19 October 2011



Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in October 2011 in Monaghan Collegiate School. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with a representative of the board of governors, the school's board of management, in-school management, and groups of teachers, parents and students. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and responses to questionnaires and examined other data in relation to the operation of the school. As part of the evaluation, a range of lessons across a number of subject areas was inspected.

The board of management 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

Monaghan Collegiate School is a co-educational fee-paying school with a current enrolment of 242 students. The school, which has a Protestant ethos, has a long tradition of providing a holistic education programme for its student population.

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Key Findings

- Structures for the management of the school are undergoing change and a board of management has recently been established.
- While senior management is committed to leading a high-quality learning community and a commitment to school improvement is evident, systematic and collaborative planning processes to support this agenda need to be further developed.
- Teachers and members of middle management are dedicated to their work and have demonstrated flexibility in revising practices to enhance students' learning.
- A broad education programme is provided. However a number of timetable issues should be addressed.
- The school infrastructure is being continuously enhanced and is maintained to a high standard.
- The quality of teaching and learning was good in most of the lessons observed, with some very good practice evident.
- Very good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from previous subject inspection reports.

1.2 Recommendations for Further Development

- The respective roles and responsibilities of the board of governors, the board of management and senior and middle management should be further clarified, and relevant continuing professional development (CPD) accessed.
- School priorities should be refined and ranked in collaboration with all stakeholders and their implementation supported by the development of action plans. A school planning team should be established to support this process.
- A whole-school policy to support subject department planning should be agreed and implemented.

- The Leaving Certificate timetable should be re-configured to ensure that all students receive the required minimum tuition time and the deployment of hours allocated for student support should be reviewed by management.
- Lesson planning should incorporate strategies for inclusion and approaches that support students in accessing the language of the curriculum.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

2.1 School ownership and management – the Board of Management

The school is in a period of transition. Until recently, the board of governors acted as patron and manager, and devolved the direct management of the school to a principal/manager. In May 2011, a board of management was established in accordance with the Education Act 1998 and the board of governors assumed the role of trustee body. The board of management is properly constituted and advice provided by the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) for Voluntary Secondary Schools has supported the transition. Four members of the board of governors currently sit on the board of management, showing evidence of their strong continued commitment to the school. The revised *Articles of Management* should be further developed to provide clarity between the respective roles and functions of the board of governors, as the trustee body, and the board of management, as the management body. The current role and responsibilities of the principal will need to be reconsidered in this context.

Three sub-committees have been set up at board level. This very good practice provides the potential to distribute leadership and responsibility for school management. As an interim arrangement, members of the board of governors who are not members of the board of management are included on these sub-committees, facilitating capacity building through the sharing of experience and expertise. Terms of reference should be established for each sub-committee to maximise their effectiveness.

At the time of the evaluation the board of management had not accessed training as a collective body. Arrangements should be made by the board to access training so as to ensure clarity of its statutory responsibilities and to support its strategic leadership and management function. To realise the spirit of partnership espoused in the school's mission statement, the board should put in place strategies to report on its workings to teachers, parents and the wider school community.

The school has been fully compliant with the requirements of Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006. At the time of the evaluation the board of governors had formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* but it remained the task for the recently established board of management to formally adopt the procedures and access relevant training. School management should address this issue, and establish procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the recently published Circular 0065/2011 and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The school's priorities for development

Since 2000, development priorities, which were drafted, in the main, by the principal/manager, have been documented. Very good progress has been made in the realisation of some of these priorities, particularly in the areas of school infrastructure and enrolment. Priorities for the next planning phase are due to be drafted. The board, following consultation with in-school management, staff, parents and students, as appropriate, should make arrangements for the development of a select number of priorities arising from an analysis of the school's current strengths and areas for development. Action plans that

identify the strategies to address the agreed priorities and that specify the timeframes and the personnel responsible for progressing each should also be documented. This approach would further develop a sense of shared ownership and vision amongst all stakeholders.

While most of the mandatory whole-school policies have been ratified by the board of governors, the board of management now needs to establish procedures for the development, ongoing review and ratification of all policies, in collaboration with all stakeholders.

2.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Leadership of staff

The senior management team is committed to leading a high-quality learning community. Some initial duties have been agreed between the principal and deputy principal, and additional duties have been taken on to address gaps that have arisen at middle management level. In realigning the role of principal, the respective roles of principal and deputy need further refinement. The senior management team actively supports the work of the school's parents' association by attending meetings and by assisting with the various activities organised throughout the year. Both the principal and deputy principal have engaged individually with a range of CPD opportunities but should now consider participating in the leadership training provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers. In particular, opportunities for collaboration with senior management teams from a range of second-level schools should be explored.

The principal is committed to instructional leadership and is promoting reflective practice through activities such as facilitating staff CPD and through leading an analysis of examination data by individual teachers. Good in-school communication systems are apparent. The open-door policy and approachability of senior management was commended by both staff and parents.

Members of middle management show dedication to their work and have demonstrated flexibility in taking on revised duties. However, an identifiable in-school management team, comprising the principal, deputy principal and post-holders needs to be further developed. No major review of the post schedule has been recently undertaken. The board should make arrangements for a complete review of the post schedule, in collaboration with all staff members, and with specific reference to the strategic priorities agreed for the school. Systematic procedures should also be put in place to monitor and review, on an annual basis, the duties attached to each post to ensure that the revised post schedule continues to meet school needs. Periodic meetings between the senior and middle management teams should be scheduled.

Staff members work well together and carry out their work in a professional and committed manner. There is a high level of engagement with subject-specific CPD. However, in-school structures to facilitate formal collaborative planning have not been fully established. There are no core teams in areas such as student care, transition year (TY) or special educational needs. Core teams in these areas need to be established to facilitate high quality integrated planning. Subject department structures also need enhancement to further support an improvement agenda focused on teaching and learning. A policy detailing the in-school structures and practices that will support subject-department planning and co-ordination should be collaboratively agreed and implemented between school management and staff.

Good progress has been made in the development of curriculum plans which, in many instances, include student-focused learning outcomes. In the main, subject planning remains the remit of individual teachers. Where there is more than one teacher of a subject,

common programmes of work should be devised, implemented and reviewed on a collaborative basis, as a means of sharing good practice and ensuring systematic provision for student learning. Occasional cross-subject department meetings could provide a useful forum where the collective expertise of the group could inform areas of common interest.

Leadership of students

A wide range of subjects and programmes is available. This is particularly commendable given the size of the student cohort. As evidence of the board's commitment to meeting students' needs, it allocates resources to fund additional specialist teachers and posts of responsibility.

Students have access to all subjects. Junior cycle students are assigned to mixed-ability classes in most subjects. In a small number of subjects concurrent timetabling arrangements provide flexibility for students to change levels. Decisions regarding choice of levels taken for the Junior Certificate examination should be deferred until as late as possible within the junior cycle, in order to gain optimum benefit from mixed-ability class settings and to ensure that students take the certificate examinations at a level that best suits their aptitudes and optimises their opportunities for success.

There is adequate timetabled provision for most subjects and it is good practice that teachers are consulted in relation to subject requirements as part of the timetabling process. The recently introduced first-year carousel programme supports students in making informed Junior Certificate subject choices. As part of the planned in-school review, due consideration should be given to reducing the duration of the carousel programme, thus minimising the loss of instruction time available to the optional subjects in first year.

For the majority of Leaving Certificate students, the current weekly instruction time falls short of the required minimum of twenty-eight hours. Management should re-configure the senior cycle timetable to eliminate study periods and ensure compliance with Circular Letter M29/95. The introduction of Physical Education and Relationships and Sexuality Education, together with the planned introduction of Religious Knowledge would ensure a more appropriate use of available time. The current shortfall in instruction time for Leaving Certificate Construction Studies should also be addressed.

Good procedures are in place to support students' transition from primary school. Leaving Certificate option bands are generated from students' preferences and very good efforts are made to accommodate all students' choices. The recently introduced student option information afternoon is indicative of good practice. To enhance existing supports, consideration should be given to organising additional parent information sessions to support transitions.

Student achievement in the certificate examinations is generally good, with a commendable uptake at higher level in most subjects. The recently amended student report template provides for very good levels of parent and student reflection and feedback. The in-school follow-up process has the potential to assist all students in optimising attainment. The plans to enhance in-school procedures for tracking students' progress are indicative of very good practice. To realise this aim the range of standardised educational assessment tests used should be reviewed. Accurate information on all students' literacy skills and cognitive ability should inform teacher planning, as well as provide baseline data to measure future student progress. Subject departments should use data from the analysis of the certificate examinations and in-house examinations to examine trends in uptake of levels and student outcomes to inform a developmental agenda for teaching and learning.

At the time of the evaluation there was lack of clarity regarding the use of some of the hours allocated by the Department of Education and Skills for student support; some of the guidance allocation was not being used for its intended purpose and the use of some of the hours available to support students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and to support students with additional learning needs lacked clarity. As a matter of priority, school management should lead a complete review of all hours designated to support students and ensure that all of the available hours are being used in accordance with relevant circulars and guidelines for best practice.

The admissions policy indicates a strong commitment to inclusion. Parents indicated that enrolment procedures are clear and that students are made to feel very welcome. Information regarding Section 29 of the Education Act should be included in a revised policy and information regarding the enrolment of students with additional learning needs should be clarified. The board of management should also re-examine the enrolment criteria in the event of over-subscription.

There is a high level of awareness of the code of behaviour among parents and students. In line with good practice, a review of the code is planned. This review should be completed in accordance with the guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board.

An atmosphere of care was evident in the school. High priority is given to tracking students' attendance and punctuality. The school administrator plays a key role in this process. Currently, a head of year supports the management and care of students in each year group. Given the small student population, consideration should be given to an alternative system of form tutors who could work in conjunction with a head of junior cycle and a head of senior cycle.

A number of policies to support student care have been developed. An over-arching whole-school guidance policy, in accordance with Section 9 of the Education Act, should now be developed. This will provide an opportunity to review the effectiveness of all student-care policies and to ensure that a co-ordinated and integrated approach is being adopted. In this context, school procedures for personal guidance and support should be reviewed.

Student leadership skills are fostered through the work of the school prefects and the student council. Ongoing guidance from a member of the teaching staff and access to relevant training would support the further development of each student organisation in the school.

2.3 Management of facilities

School buildings and infrastructure are maintained to a high standard. Sizeable investment has been made in the development of facilities. The parents' association plays a significant role in supporting ongoing infrastructural development.

Specialist rooms are, in the main, very well equipped. An annual stocktake is completed. The outcomes of this commendable practice should systematically inform ongoing purchasing of equipment and address any shortfalls identified in all subject areas. It is particularly good practice that staff training in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) has underpinned the recent upgrading of the ICT facilities.

A health and safety statement, based on risk-assessment statements, is in place. As a number of specialist rooms are used by more than one teacher, it is recommended that an agreed set of classroom rules for the maintenance and organisation of these rooms be implemented.

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 The quality of learning and teaching

The overall quality of teaching and learning was good in the majority of lessons observed, with some very good practice noted in a significant minority of those lessons. There was scope for development evident in almost one third of the lessons observed.

Short-term planning was evident for all of the lessons, with very good practice noted in the majority of instances. Learning outcomes were shared with students from the outset of the majority of lessons. At times there was scope to adjust the pace or pitch of the lesson to a level more commensurate with students' needs. Best practice was noted where the learning outcomes were student focused with appropriate differentiation, and where they were used to scaffold the lesson structure. Time should be allocated in each lesson to re-visit learning outcomes to assess students' actual progress.

Explanations of new subject matter were clear in the majority of lessons, with some very good use made of ICT to enhance learning. Some very good efforts were made to vary the teaching strategies used, which facilitated optimal student engagement. This very good practice should be extended to all subject areas. Further attention and emphasis needs to be placed on supporting students' literacy in all lessons. It is recommended that a whole-school approach to literacy development be adopted to enhance students' understanding of the language of the curriculum.

In almost all lessons classroom management was very good and students' attendance well monitored. However, in a number of lessons, all students were not supported in participating fully in class activities. It is recommended that immediate attention should be paid to ensuring the full inclusion of all students in all lessons.

Students' progress was assessed by teachers through questioning and monitoring of class activities. Some very good use was made of questioning to support higher-order thinking among students. In the cross-section of copybooks reviewed some very good practice in the monitoring and marking of students' work was noted. However, in over one third of the lessons observed there was scope to enhance formative assessment practices. Teachers should review assessment practices to include regular monitoring and feedback to students on the quality and potential of their work.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

4.1 Management

Almost all of the recommendations to be addressed by management have been implemented. Examples include the introduction of a subject-sampling programme and the facilitation of whole-staff CPD in Assessment for Learning. It is noted as particularly good practice that a recommendation made in relation to risk assessment has been implemented in almost all subject areas. This is further evidence of management's commitment to leading an effective learning community.

Some of the recommendations made in relation to subject planning have not yet been fully realised by subject departments.

4.2 Learning and Teaching

Teachers are making good progress in implementing teaching and learning recommendations. Particular examples noted were an extension in the range of summative assessment modes and use of targeted higher-order questions. Commendable efforts are being made to use ICT to enhance learning and, in some instances, to enhance collaborative planning through shared electronic resources folders. It was noted positively that a record of progress in implementing recommendations is retained in planning folders.

Implementation of recommendations made in relation to the expansion of the range of teaching methodologies and reviewing formative assessment practices have not yet been fully realised.

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

School management and staff are committed to school improvement but systems to support collaborative practices are underdeveloped. To date, whole-school improvement strategies and their achievement have been overly dependent on the input of the principal. Responsibility for leading and co-ordinating school development planning now needs to be shared with other members of staff and the board. The absence of a school development planning team is limiting the school's capacity to engage in collaborative self-evaluation. A school planning team should be established to support ongoing school planning and self-evaluation. As evident from responses to questionnaires, mechanisms that routinely seek the views of parents and students need also to be considered.

The staff target pro-forma report recently introduced by the principal seeks to enhance reflective practice. Targets set by individual teachers should complement agreed subject and whole-school priorities and the action plans should be specific, easily measurable and derived from whole-school priorities.

Some very good collaborative and reflective practices were noted in agreeing teaching strategies and in using trends in examination data to inform planning. The recently introduced formal evaluation of TY is illustrative of very good practice.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management accept the findings of the Inspection Report and as with previous Reports will implement any changes required. The Board with the Principal and Staff of the school is committed to providing a high quality education in a welcoming inclusive environment for all our young people, ensuring that each student has the opportunity to reach their full potential. To that end we welcome the advice and support of the Inspectorate.

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

- Since the Inspection the newly formed Board of Management has attended the relevant training sessions for Board of Management members.
- Revised articles of Management have been adopted by the Board of Management and the respective roles of the Board of Governors and the Board of Management clarified.
- Literacy and numeracy training was provided by Monaghan Education Centre in November 2011 and March 2012 and the Principal and SEB coordinator has attended the training.