

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Marino College
Fairview, Dublin 3
Roll number: 70250S**

Date of inspection: 8 May 2014



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
AND SKILLS
INSPECTORATE**

Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning

A whole-school evaluation of management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) was undertaken in May 2014 in Marino College. Further education (FE) provision in this school was not included in the evaluation. This report presents the findings of the evaluation of second-level provision and makes recommendations for improvement. During the evaluation, the inspection team met with 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 subjects in the second-level section of the school 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

Marino College was established in 1936 and operates under the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb). It comprises a post-primary school with a current enrolment of 120 girls and 123 boys and a college of further education with a large student cohort located on a separate campus. The cohort of students in the post-primary school reflects the cultural diversity of its catchment area. The school offers the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate programme. Marino College participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- School management is committed to the whole school community with a particular emphasis on partnership with parents.
- While teachers are very actively engaged in the work of the school, a more focused and strategic approach to leadership and management is needed.
- Timetabling and deployment anomalies and issues are evident.
- The very well organised student support structure is a key strength of the school.
- A welcoming, affirming and respectful atmosphere has been developed by senior management and is supported by all staff.
- Good or very good teaching and learning, with some instances of excellent practice, was observed in most lessons while there was scope for development, particularly in the area of assessment, in a small number.

Recommendations for Further Development

- Senior management should further develop its strategic leadership role to ensure that school development initiatives including DEIS, subject, and whole-school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) are actively managed and progressed.
- The posts of responsibility and the timetable should be reviewed to ensure the implementation of best practice with regard to deployment of staff and lesson distribution in the interest of student progress and attainment.
- The school should implement an RSE programme at senior cycle in accordance with Circulars 0037/2010 and 0023/2010.

- The homework policy should be reviewed; homework should be consistently and regularly assigned and assessed.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The board of management is strongly committed to the development of the school and brings a wide range of expertise to bear on its work. Clear procedures for meetings have been established. The principal's report follows a standard template that is common to all CDET B schools. To further develop awareness of whole-school issues the board should consider requesting the analysis of DEIS targets at each meeting with particular reference to suspension, attendance, punctuality and retention.

The board has contributed to the development of a wide range of policies. However, some policies have not been reviewed for a number of years. To ensure that timely updates for all policies are effected, a rolling schedule for the systematic review of policies should be put in place.

The board communicates with the school community informally. A structured and formalised way of communicating decisions and issues that are relevant to the management of the school should be agreed and implemented. The requirement to report on the operation of the school to the wider school community by June 2014, as specified in Circular 40/2012 (Implementation of School Self-Evaluation), should also be noted.

The board is approaching the end of its term of office. The CDET B representative reported that training will be provided for the new board and that the handbook for boards of management in post-primary CDET B schools is currently under review.

The principal has responsibility for both the college of further education and the post-primary school while the deputy principal is dedicated to the latter. Each has a discrete set of responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the school. They meet together informally on a daily basis to discuss administrative, staff management and student support issues.

Leadership roles are distributed at middle management level. The schedule of posts which has not been reviewed in recent years identifies year heads and co-ordinators for in-school functions. It would now be timely to execute a formal review to ensure that the overarching needs of the school are identified and that the corresponding responsibilities are assigned.

Partnership with parents is enabled through a very active parents' association (PA) and is supported by the home-school-community liaison (HSCL) teacher. Parents commented on the welcoming and inclusive school atmosphere.

The school's first DEIS plan was completed in 2012, however, the subsequent three year plan has not yet been ratified. The board and senior management should ensure that the new plan, with a sharp focus on specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound (SMART) targets, action planning, evaluation, and review is completed and ratified as soon as is practicable.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

A leadership team comprising the principal and deputy principal, year heads, programme co-ordinators, the special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator, the school planning co-ordinator and the HSCL teacher has been established and meets formally on a weekly basis.

Responsibility is delegated to members of the team as well as other staff members for a wide range of initiatives including the whole-school literacy strategy, subject planning, JCSP initiatives and the continuing development of the information and communication technology (ICT) policy. However, clear reporting arrangements have not been put in place with the result that delegated responsibilities are not sufficiently monitored by senior management. Leadership is required from senior management to agree reporting structures for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of delegated tasks.

Members of staff in almost all instances are deployed in line with their subject specialisms and display a strong commitment to their students. However, there are a number of anomalies relative to deployment including the number of class-contact hours in some teachers' timetables. A full review of all teachers' timetables should be carried out by school management in consultation with the CDET B to ensure that all available teaching hours are utilised in the best interest of students.

Teachers are encouraged and supported by school management to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. Whole-school CPD is provided by external facilitators as well as by staff members. To ensure that best value is derived from externally provided CPD, strategies to enable feedback to be given to all staff should be considered.

Staff meetings are scheduled as part of Croke Park hours and agendas are typically set by teachers to address specific issues. This results in limited time being available for the discussion of whole-school issues and for subject planning. Senior management should adopt a more strategic approach to the development of staff meeting agendas to ensure that whole-school improvement, subject planning and the discussion of whole-school issues are proactively supported and enabled.

Teachers have engaged with subject planning over a number of years and plans exist for almost all subjects. Some very high quality plans that link learning outcomes with resources, methodologies and assessment were examined during this evaluation. While good reflective commentary was noted, in some instances similar issues were identified year-on-year and have not resulted in action planning for improvement. Senior management should review subject department plans on an annual basis and ensure that action plans are developed and implemented for all subjects.

Peer observation to support the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning is being introduced. This is highly commended.

The school allocates time for each subject broadly in line with syllabus guidelines. However, the spread of lessons in some subjects, the timing of double periods, the sharing of class groups and the absence of PE on the sixth-year timetable are issues in the current timetable. While students have access to all available programmes and subjects, the size of the school presents challenges in providing a broad curriculum. The introduction of a Transition Year programme and changes to the range of subjects on offer are currently being considered. A review of timetabling should be undertaken in consultation with all stakeholders to ensure that syllabus guidelines and best practice are observed to meet the educational needs of students.

The school with the support of the board of management is planning to introduce a timetable based on one-hour lesson periods. The implementation should be monitored and evaluated at whole-school level to ensure a positive impact for students. Topics for consideration could include: the impact on continuity in teaching and learning, fulfilment of syllabus and coursework requirements, subject planning and schemes of work, teaching methodologies, student engagement and the implications for students with poor attendance patterns.

Attendance and punctuality figures are recorded and monitored mainly using paper-based systems. Improvement strategies, including texting parents and a popular postcard initiative, have been implemented. However, senior management and staff commented on the difficulty of analysing attendance patterns using the systems that are available to them. For this reason alternative systems should be considered to ensure that issues can be identified and responses provided in a timely manner.

A major strength of the school is the very well organised student support structure. The care team which comprises senior management, year heads, the guidance counsellor, the HSCL teacher, the SEN co-ordinator and the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) teachers meet weekly. Counselling and access to the NBSS behaviour support unit is available through teacher interventions and student self-referral. External agencies are utilised as required and student progress is carefully monitored.

The school's code of behaviour promotes positive reinforcement and an overwhelming majority of parents and students who were surveyed agreed that they knew about and understood the school rules. The atmosphere in the school during the evaluation was universally positive and students' behaviour was very good. However, a significant minority of students who were surveyed did not agree that students' behaviour is good or that all students are treated fairly and respectfully. These findings should be further explored.

Sanctions are clearly defined and culminate in suspension and expulsion. It was reported that internal suspension is used in certain circumstances. It would be worthwhile re-examining the strategies around the use of suspension with a view to minimising students' absences from school.

A qualified counsellor provides timetabled guidance education for senior cycle students and personal counselling by appointment. Consideration could also be given to providing guidance for junior cycle students through exploring the synergies with the SPHE programme.

Learning support is provided by three qualified resource teachers and a small number of subject teachers. Team-teaching is timetabled in some instances. The very well organised SEN plan states that each student's file is reviewed every six weeks. Assessment of students' progress, including students' self-assessment, should also be recorded. The SEN team would benefit from regular timetabled meetings.

Some progress has been made in the provision of support for students whose first language is not English. Those who have an exemption from Irish are timetabled for language support classes at junior cycle, while an alternative subject option is made available for senior cycle students. As part of a CDET initiative, a trained teacher of English as a foreign language provides additional, and valuable, support to some students. However, there are weaknesses in the overall provision: there is no current plan; diagnostic testing is not used to establish students' needs; and students' progress is not assessed. In line with SSE processes a strategic plan for the provision of English as an additional language (EAL) should be established to ensure that students' language development needs are provided for and that available resources are used to maximum effect. The school should refer to the Department of Education and Skills' publication *Looking at English as an Additional Language* for best practice guidelines and the *EAL Post-Primary Assessment Kit* for details of assessment procedures.

SPHE is taught as part of the junior cycle programme. However, not all of the teachers have received training and procedures to support collaborative planning are not evident.

Currently, there is no SPHE coordinator and an RSE programme at senior cycle is not being fully delivered. The school should, as a matter of priority, address these issues and refer to Circulars 0037/2010 and 0023/2010 for best practice guidelines in the mandatory implementation of SPHE/RSE in the junior cycle and RSE in the senior cycle.

A representative student council has been democratically elected and is actively engaged in school activities. The council has a role in the review of relevant policies and has effected changes in the school environment. Senior students support first-year students in their transition to the post-primary school through a “buddy” system. A head girl and head boy are appointed following an application and interview process. These positive initiatives enhance the role and responsibilities of students in the school and could be further developed through the provision of training for the council and opportunities for interaction with the board, the PA and the whole staff.

Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

1.2 Management of facilities

The school is a well-maintained, attractive and welcoming learning environment. The lack of social space for students presents difficulties for timetabling of breaks. Despite this, the school has enabled first-year students to be kept within the school building at lunchtime in response to parents’ wishes.

The JCSP library provides excellent resources for students. It is used extensively for the promotion of literacy through very well facilitated reading programmes.

ICT resources are very good. All classrooms are fully equipped with data projectors and staff and students have tablet devices to support teaching and learning. It is commendable that the CPD for the rollout of ICT was provided by in-house staff.

A health and safety statement has been prepared and the CDET is providing training for school principals in the area of risk management.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in most of the lessons observed and there were some instances of excellent practice. In a small number of lessons there was scope for development, particularly in the areas of assessment and the monitoring of student learning.

Lessons were well planned and some very good resources were used. In all cases, the teacher communicated the lesson content to students. In some lessons, learning outcomes were used to focus students’ attention throughout the lesson, however, in other lessons, there was less clarity around what students were expected to achieve. Teachers should ensure that planned learning outcomes are expressed in terms of what the student should know or be able to do, and are revisited during the lesson so that learning can be evaluated.

In many lessons, teachers used a range of active methodologies which facilitated both independent and collaborative learning. Pair and group work were used to good effect in some lessons with very well managed feedback observed in a number of lessons. Teachers

should ensure that active learning is facilitated and that good practice and expertise are shared within and across subject departments.

In some lessons, ICT was used to support teaching and learning. However, in a number of lessons, opportunities to integrate the use of ICT into the lesson were not exploited. Teachers and students should be encouraged to embed the use of ICT into teaching and learning wherever possible.

Classroom interactions were respectful and students were encouraged and affirmed. In all lessons, students' behaviour was good.

Homework was assigned in many of the lessons observed. In most cases, the homework was planned to complement and reinforce the learning that took place during the lesson. However, inconsistent assessment practices and inconsistencies in the assignment and correction of homework and in the use of homework journals were evident. The homework policy should be reviewed and practices should be agreed and implemented in the best interest of students' progress and attainment.

Very good displays of students' work were observed in many classrooms. The celebration of student achievement in this way is to be commended.

Students worked well in lessons and demonstrated good knowledge of their subjects. In some lessons, students were given opportunities for interaction and discussion through which learning was consolidated and extended. Teachers should maximise the opportunities for students to develop their own learning.

In many lessons teachers paid attention to the development of literacy. Subject-specific keywords were used and technical terms were explained although there was not always sufficient time or opportunity given to ensure that the meanings of words had been assimilated. Students should be given ample opportunity to use new words and demonstrate their understanding.

In some lessons, students were encouraged to reflect on their learning and to self-assess using "traffic lights" cards. In other lessons, students were encouraged to learn from each other through paired working arrangements. These good practices should be extended to facilitate students to take more responsibility for their own learning and progress.

Attainment in state examinations reflects an increase in higher-level uptake in some subjects at both junior and senior cycle, and a significant reduction in foundation-level uptake at junior cycle. These improvements are commended. It is also noteworthy that a number of students in recent years have been facilitated to take Leaving Certificate exams in non-curricular languages. Attainment in school assessments and state examinations should continue to be analysed so that barriers to success can be identified and strategies put in place to ensure that each student is achieving to his or her potential in all subjects.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

Progress is evident in the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations.

The LCA master timetable has been reconfigured to provide students with a minimum of twenty-eight hours of instruction each week. Specialist art rooms are used for their designated purpose where practicable. The Art subject department plan includes a learning

outcomes approach and the first year programme addresses the required areas. Planning for sharing practice through peer observation in Irish has commenced.

Timetabling issues identified in the English subject inspection should be addressed as part of the overall review of timetabling.

Recommendations for LCA require further attention.

Senior management should take a stronger role in driving and monitoring the implementation of recommendations and bringing them to the attention of all subject departments.

3.2 Learning and teaching

Subject departments have made some progress in the implementation of recommendations: the use of learning outcomes was observed in some lessons and assessment for learning will be the subject of whole-school CPD in the coming academic year.

A system for recording and monitoring the status of all recommendations should be implemented.

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

Senior management has initiated a more focused approach to DEIS and SSE planning through its assignment of responsibility to a single member of the management team.

Teachers have demonstrated a good understanding of the SSE processes: an SSE report in the area of literacy has been developed; an extensive literacy survey has been executed; and baseline data for the new DEIS plan is currently being analysed.

Strategic management of DEIS and SSE planning is now needed to ensure that the school's capacity for improvement is realised.

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 welcomes the report and is pleased with its contents. Marino College will continue with the process of School Development Planning and curricular review and welcomes the constructive recommendations made in the report. The Board welcomes the report's recognition of the student support services, engagement with parents and the respectful atmosphere in the College. Staff appreciate the recognition of the teaching and learning environment that they have created and that they continually strive to improve.

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 following actions have been undertaken

- SPHE/RSE policy has been revisited, a committee is in the process of tweaking the College policy. CPD is being availed of by the subject department.
- Weekly SEN meetings have been scheduled
- Homework policy is being reviewed
- The EAL provision is being restructured