

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**St David's CBS
Artane, Dublin 5
Roll number: 60471F**

Date of inspection: 9 May 2013



**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 2013 in St David's Christian Brothers School (CBS). This report presents the findings of the evaluation 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 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

St David's CBS was founded in 1966 in temporary accommodation and moved to its current location some years later. The school is a member of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). It serves a diverse catchment area. Enrolment had declined significantly but there are indications of an upward trend. Currently, 445 boys are enrolled. St David's CBS participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- Management, leadership and learning are effective in many areas.
- Good progress has been made in some DEIS planning areas.
- A good range of subjects and programmes is available.
- There are some good structures and supports for students in place.
- Teaching and learning is good or very good and exemplary practice was observed in some cases.
- The school has initiated a self-evaluation process (SSE) and this has been very positive in raising awareness of issues and in establishing working groups.

Recommendations for Further Development

- Building on the good work done, the SSE process and DEIS planning should be closely aligned; planning for improved attainment should ensure targets are set to raise expectations for all students; all areas of DEIS planning should be fully developed.
- The school should give very strong consideration to mixed-ability setting for first year to avoid the risk of negative labelling; subject choices should be reviewed in junior cycle.
- The school should develop a pastoral care policy to underpin care structures and should ensure that the student voice inputs meaningfully into all aspects of school life.
- Care room management should be reviewed; a more targeted approach should be used to improve outcomes for those with identified patterns of serious misbehaviour.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The board of management is appropriately constituted and roles and responsibilities are understood. The school has a very good relationship with the trustees and both the board and trustees are united in their support of the school.

The board is reflective in style and is deeply committed to the effective running of the school. It has adopted mandatory policies and oversees review and development of policies as need arises. A systematic process of rolling review should be established and a review date set for all policies.

Decision-making procedures are open. A range of developmental priorities has been agreed and these were determined through collaboration and consultation with senior management and staff.

A good school plan is in place. The current DEIS plan has not been ratified by the board. DEIS planning in the areas of target setting, monitoring and evaluation are in need of development. Clear linkages should be established between the school's recently initiated SSE process and DEIS planning. DEIS planning and SSE processes should be aligned.

The board demonstrates willingness to engage with the key stakeholders. It communicates its work informally through verbal reports communicated to staff and parents. An agreed written report should be disseminated to achieve consistency. Findings from a survey of parents indicate that there is scope for improving communications further and for seeking parents' views on school matters.

The parents' council is very supportive of the school. Meetings are well attended and there is good communication between the council, principal and board. The council should consider ways in which it might engage the wider parent body on an ongoing basis. It is recommended that the board and parents' council each have dedicated space on the school website and in the school newsletter in order to communicate their work to parents.

The board should prioritise promotion of the student council. Currently, of the students surveyed, a significant majority either did not know or disagreed that they had a say in how to make the school a better place.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

The roles and responsibilities of senior management are clearly defined and agreed. The principal and deputy principal work very well as a team. The senior management team encourages initiative, distributes leadership roles and staff interviewed felt empowered. This is highly commended.

Most roles attached to posts are appropriate and carried out effectively. There is considerable inequity in the duties attached to posts. Future review of the post-structure should ensure a fairer distribution of duties and there should be closer alignment between the post-structure and prioritised needs identified through the DEIS planning process linked to SSE. Post holders should report formally on their roles.

Teaching staff are deployed according to their qualifications and expertise in most cases. There should be a general review of teacher deployment to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from allocated hours. The school should review its management of Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students on an ongoing basis.

The school is commended for its level of support for personal continuing professional development (CPD) and there is very positive engagement. Areas worth considering for future CPD planning are whole-school differentiation and teaching and learning strategies to improve literacy and numeracy in all subject areas.

Communication between home and school is good; a good variety of media is used and the school has an open-door policy. The Home School Community Liaison (HSL) co-ordinator plays an important role in communicating with parents.

Parents can view their child's attendance and the results of in-house tests through the e-portal. This is highly commended. The school should explore additional ways to support some parents in accessing this very good facility.

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*. The school needs to improve students' and parents' awareness of the school's policy and practice.

Considerable efforts are made to meet the needs of a diverse student cohort. All curricular programmes are available and this is very commendable. There is scope for development in some aspects of provision. The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is not available every year. This should be reviewed given the suitability of the programme for a specific cohort of students. The practice of making the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) compulsory in fifth year, when it is optional in sixth year, should be reviewed. The Transition Year (TY) has many positive elements and is a very popular programme.

A good range of subjects is available. Senior cycle students expressed satisfaction with subject choices. In first year, students can sample a pre-set menu of subjects and then choose one option. This represents a positive response to a previous Guidance report. There are some issues that need to be addressed. There is a lack of clarity around provision of the second subject option which is chosen in advance of entry. Staff shortages in some areas, for example, Woodwork, may be restricting choice. Some students are not offered a language option and this should be reviewed in the interests of equality of opportunity. In general, the school needs to develop a whole-school policy around the provision of modern European languages.

Provision for junior cycle Maths and English is good. It is commendable that efforts are made to ensure that all students, including those with special needs, have access to Science and History although some do not present for examination in these subjects.

The enrolment policy should be updated. There is a lack of clarity regarding access to TY and availability of the LCA programme. The placement of first-year students in groups according to initial assessment tests should be reviewed. Current arrangements put students at risk of negative labelling. In line with a previous inspection report on special educational needs (SEN) 2010, the school should give very strong consideration to mixed-ability setting for all first-year classes.

Attendance is logged in a systematic manner. There are strategies in place intended to maximise student attendance and retention. Evaluation of effectiveness needs to take place.

Almost all parents surveyed are familiar with the code of behaviour and consider discipline to be good. Some aspects of the current code are commendable, for example, the focus on positive behaviour and the merit system. Some areas need review: the language used should

engage all stakeholders; sanctions should be graduated and proportionate; the ladder of referral should be clearly tiered and linked.

While most students surveyed consider that they are treated fairly, a small number do not agree. This perception is endorsed by a minority of parents surveyed. The school needs to take account of these messages in its student management procedures. The school should explore Restorative Justice Practice in its management of student behaviour and aim to lower its suspension rates.

Rules are very clear with regard to the use of the care room. However, in its current form, it is ineffective as a strategy for modifying behaviour, given the number of repeat records noted in the case of a very small number of students. Currently, supervising teachers log details of those referred and most students return to their lesson immediately: the use of teaching resources to staff this arrangement on a full time basis represents a considerable investment of available staff time which could be used more effectively if deployed to deliver a programme of learning. It is recommended that all aspects of care room management be reviewed. A more targeted approach should be used for those with identified patterns of serious misbehaviour. The school could consider establishing a behaviour modification classroom, strictly following NBSS guidelines, for identified students, if deemed necessary.

Some good student support structures are in place for example, the care team which meets weekly. The HSCL co-ordinator plays a key role. A transfer programme from primary to post-primary school involves TY students as mentors to incoming first years and this is positive. There are very good links with feeder primary schools. There is however, no overarching pastoral care policy to underpin structures and practice. It is strongly recommended that a pastoral care policy be developed.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is provided in line with requirements. A recommendation from a SPHE report that a core teaching team be formed has not been implemented on the grounds that those who teach SPHE are class tutors. This arrangement should be reviewed as it links SPHE directly to the role of tutor and runs the risk of compromising lesson time while tutors discharge the functions of their roles.

A relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy is in place. Student survey findings indicate that a significant minority of students are not satisfied with relationships and sexuality education and with the school's attention to drug and alcohol issues. These issues need to be addressed at whole-school level.

The school benefits from a year head and tutor structure. It is positive that duties attached to roles are documented. As there are only two year heads for the entire school, the structure is not operating optimally. It is recommended that a designated year head, working with class tutors, manage each year group. Care of students should receive greater emphasis in role descriptions. The school could consider providing designated pastoral care time, for example, ten minutes daily, to allow tutors to carry out their roles.

There is good practice in a number of areas related to Guidance and the Guidance department has a very good dedicated page on the school website.

It is commendable that the school is promoting positive mental health through counselling and modules in the TY programme. An anti-bullying policy is in place and a Friendship week is held annually to raise awareness of issues. A majority of students and parents consider that the school deals well with bullying.

Students with special educational needs are provided with a variety of supports and learning experiences. The school has an autism unit. The progress of students in receipt of learning support is monitored. Only those in the Autism Unit have individual learning plans and this should be reviewed to demonstrate engagement with the process in line with the SEN report recommendation.

Numbers of students in receipt of English as an Additional Language (EAL) are very small, however there is scope for development in the area of tracking and testing using the *Post Primary Assessment Kit*.

Currently, students do not have a formal voice in the running of the school. Some good work has been done by the student council in the past. The election of a student council has not taken place in the current academic year. The council should be facilitated to recommence its work as a valuable means of promoting student partnership.

A very good range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities is available in the area of games and music. Drama activities were available in the past and these are worth revisiting. It is positive that soccer is provided at lunch time for targeted students and this is financed by the School Completion Programme.

1.3 Management of facilities

School accommodation is well maintained. Many of the general areas are conducive to a positive learning environment and this needs to be extended to all areas. Commendably, some efforts are currently being made to address issues.

Facilities are generally good, particularly in the area of sport and Physical Education. The school has developed a reading room. Information and communications technology (ICT) facilities are good and the school is commended for its focus on improving provision and infrastructure. In conjunction with the reinstated student council, and the parents' council, the school could consider how it might create recreational areas for students within the limits of its resources.

An outside agency is employed to ensure that health and safety procedures and statement are compliant with legislation. Teachers of the practical subjects input into the risk-assessment process.

Department of Education and Skills funding has enabled the school to partially implement a recommendation in relation to chemical storage.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

Twenty-two lessons over twenty-four class periods were observed during the course of the evaluation. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good or very good and exemplary practice was noted in some instances. Teacher enthusiasm for the subject was clearly communicated in a number of lessons and this was reflected in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. In a very few cases, there was considerable scope for improvement.

Data from the state examinations is analysed by senior management. Student attainment fluctuates considerably from year to year. Currently, data gathering is not feeding into planning for teaching, learning and assessment. General attainment targets set in the DEIS plan are not referenced in subject plans and there is no linkage. The role of the subject departments and teachers in setting and delivering specific and achievable targets needs to

be clearly communicated so that action plans can be developed, progress monitored and impact evaluated.

It is positive that subject plans can be accessed electronically on the school network. A learning outcomes framework was adopted in the plan for first-year Maths: this is good practice. The framework should be developed to include all years. The model could form a basis for discussion and application in other subject areas.

Planning for individual lessons was very good. In the majority, intended learning outcomes were clear and relevant and were shared explicitly with students at the start of lessons. Of particular merit was review and summary at the end of some lessons to ensure that learning had been achieved.

ICT and audio-visual resources were used in a majority of lessons. Good or very good use was made of these in a significant minority. Creative resources that reinforced learning are highly commended in some lessons.

To cater for the learning needs and abilities of a diverse student cohort, differentiation in planning, teaching approaches, selection of content and assessment is an area for development. Appropriate practice was observed in a minority of lessons only.

Methods used were appropriate in most cases. Active-learning approaches were deployed in many lessons and this is highly commended. Group work was used to very good effect in some lessons. The learning atmosphere was very positive in all cases. Use of the classroom to create a stimulating learning environment was good or very good overall. In a very small number of cases, teaching methods did not engage learners.

In many lessons observed, the development of knowledge, and skills appropriate to the subject was prioritised. Particularly commended is the encouragement of higher-order thinking in some lessons. In all language lessons, student use of the target language in meaningful communicative contexts should be a focus.

High expectations of student achievement were noted in many lessons. Students engaged purposefully in tasks that were appropriate and learning was actively monitored. In a minority of lessons, there was too much emphasis on low level tasks that did not promote meaningful engagement with learning. In a very few cases, there was evidence of low expectations and students were insufficiently challenged.

Assessment practice varied. Exemplary assessment practice was observed in one lesson where a combination of self-assessment and teacher assessment was used and students were encouraged to reflect on their learning. There is some use of common testing and this is positive; further opportunities should be explored.

Homework was regularly assigned in most lessons. Very good developmental feedback was noted in some copybooks. In a small minority of cases, homework was infrequently or never assigned. In these cases, there was no evidence of developmental written teacher feedback in copybooks or of progress tracking. This needs to be addressed.

Whole-school numeracy approaches such as the display of posters around the school are commended. A focus on literacy and numeracy was noted in many lessons. However, in a significant minority, opportunities were missed. It is recommended that whole-school literacy and numeracy strategies be consistently implemented in all lessons.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

The school has demonstrated commitment to the implementation of recommendations from previous inspection reports in many cases. However, areas remain to be addressed regarding the SEN report. The formation of a core SPHE team still needs to be implemented

3.2 Learning and teaching

There have been very good responses to subject inspections in some subject areas. More needs to be done regarding whole-school literacy and numeracy.

It is suggested that subject departments formally respond to evaluation findings and develop action plans to address issues.

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

The school's recently established SSE process, led by a staff member, has been instrumental in identifying whole-school issues and priorities and in forming working groups. This is very positive. Building on this good work, the school now needs to align its SSE process with circular 0040/2012 and DEIS planning. The school demonstrates good capacity for school improvement.

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 appreciates that the following positive points were noted by the Inspectors:

1. Considerable efforts are made to meet the needs of the students.
2. A majority of students and parents consider that the school deals well with bullying.
3. Almost all parents consider discipline to be good and some aspects are commendable.
4. The quality of teaching was good, very good or exemplary.
5. In most cases teaching methods were appropriate, high expectations of student achievement were noted and Homework was assigned regularly with feedback given.
6. Senior management's role, the school's support for CPD, whole-school numeracy approaches, the promotion of positive mental health and ICT provision are all commended.
7. The good student support, including the role of the HSCL teacher, the Care Team, the use of Mentors and the links with primary schools.
8. Most students consider themselves to be treated fairly.
9. A good school plan is in place.
10. Parents council is supportive of the school and well attended.
11. A good range of subjects is available.

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