

**A Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Saint Joseph's Secondary School  
Stanhope Street, Dublin 7  
Roll number: 60843Q**

**Date of inspection: 20 April 2016**



**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 April 2016 in Saint Joseph's Secondary School. 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 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***

Saint Joseph's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school for girls under the trusteeship of the Religious Sisters of Charity. The current cohort of 216 students brings a richness and diversity to the school. Enrolments have been falling in recent years, due largely to demographic factors. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion, and thus benefits from additional staffing and financial allocations.

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

#### ***Key Findings***

- The board of management is strongly committed to the future development of the school; at the time of the evaluation, the board was not properly constituted due to the parent nominees stepping down in June 2015.
- There is a need to further develop and implement a shared vision for the school, and strengthen its processes for strategic planning.
- The senior management team (SMT) is diligent in its efforts to promote excellence in teaching, learning and school improvement.
- There is scope to implement a more collaborative and consultative approach to planning for teaching and learning and school development.
- The SMT and staff make effective efforts to provide a high level of care and support to students and this is a key strength of the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in most observed lessons was good; strategies that support differentiation, active learning and formative assessment should be further developed.

#### ***Recommendations for Further Development***

- The board of management should be properly constituted.
- The DEIS planning process should be robust and informed by a shared vision for the school; systematic use of data should inform all planning, monitoring and review processes, and relevant core planning teams should be established.
- The schedule of posts should be reviewed to ensure that the priority needs of the school are met.
- The school timetable should be reconfigured in line with the requirements of Department Circular M29/95; and the allocation of resources for the provision of

supports to students with additional learning needs should be in accordance with directions provided in Department Circular 70/14.

- Strategies that support differentiation and facilitate students to actively reflect on and assess their learning need to be deployed further in lessons, and supported through a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) for staff.

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

### ***1.1 School ownership and management***

School management and leadership have strengths in various areas. There is a commendable level of expertise and energy within the membership of the current board of management, whose term ends in October 2016. The board members demonstrate a strong commitment to the future development of the school and are pro-active in their engagement with staff. At the time of the evaluation, the board had not been properly constituted since the summer of 2015 when the two parent nominees stepped down. This issue should be addressed by the trustees, as a matter of priority.

The board demonstrates a very good level of awareness of its duties and responsibilities. A lot of its time has been spent working closely with the Financial Services Support Unit of the Joint Managerial Body to address financial issues that are impacting on the school.

The trustees provide support to the school through its education office. Given that the board's stated priority is ensuring the future viability of the school—in terms of addressing financial challenges, upgrading facilities and increasing student enrolment—it is important that the trustees continue to play a clear and very strong role in supporting the board into the future.

All of the mandatory policies are in place. The current board has led the development and review of a number of policies and the chairperson has facilitated whole-staff CPD in child protection. However, many whole-school policies remain in need of update and review. Systematic procedures for the development, review and ratification of policies should now be developed.

Questionnaire data indicates a need for the board to enhance its communication with staff, parents and students. The board keeps a good record of its work; it would be useful to issue a formally agreed report to relevant stakeholders after each meeting. In addition, the dissemination of an annual report on the operation and performance of the school should be considered.

Procedures for whole-school planning need to be strengthened. It is commendable that management and staff have already taken the first step in this process by engaging collaboratively in a re-branding exercise that included developing a new motto for the school: "*Nurturing Excellence in the Heart of the City – Together We Succeed.*" Priorities for the implementation of this shared vision should now be agreed.

Significant weaknesses were identified in the DEIS planning process. Systematic procedures for the establishment of targets, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the plan, were not evident during the evaluation. The board should ensure that robust mechanisms to facilitate effective strategic planning for the school are established.

The school's DEIS 2013-2016 plan is coming to an end. The board should oversee a formal review of progress in respect of the targets outlined in that plan. The next cycle of DEIS planning should be underpinned by a shared vision for the school. New targets and strategies should be based on the collection and analysis of baseline data. A core DEIS

planning team should be established to lead this work. The board should monitor the ongoing implementation of the plan.

Responses to questionnaires indicate that the school is very welcoming of parents. The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator plays a key role in providing support to parents.

Mechanisms used to involve parents and students in school planning matters require enhancement. Fresh efforts should be made to establish a parents' association. It is a positive development that student leadership is promoted through a student council, a prefect system and a *Cara* mentoring programme.

### ***1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning***

The quality of effectiveness of leadership for learning is fair overall, with scope for development in a number of key areas that support learning.

The SMT of principal and deputy principal is relatively new to the role, is committed to fostering a culture of care and is diligent in its efforts to promote excellence in teaching, learning and school improvement. Their individual roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, but they carry a heavy workload that may be unsustainable in the longer term. Responses to questionnaires indicate that there is scope for greater communication and consultation on school matters between management and staff, and for greater collaboration between staff members themselves in planning for teaching and learning and discussing and sharing effective strategies.

In the recent past, a number of worthwhile initiatives have been implemented to help support teaching and learning, including the holding of assemblies and after-school study, the mentoring of Professional Masters in Education students, the appointment of a positive-behaviour-for-learning teacher, engaging the services of a French-language assistant, developing closer links with the neighbouring Dublin Institute of Technology, expanding work-experience opportunities and developing a very beneficial Business in the Community Programme.

The middle-management team comprises two assistant principals and three special duties teachers. There is scope for a better alignment between the duties attached to these posts and the school's developmental priorities. The current duties of assistant principals, for example, relate to the monitoring of attendance with no defined disciplinary role in the ladder of referral. It is recommended that an overall review of the schedule of posts be conducted, in collaboration with all staff. Given the small number of students in the school, consideration should be given to having one junior-cycle and one senior-cycle year head, with an expanded role for tracking pastoral, academic and discipline issues. Meetings between the senior and middle-management teams should be held regularly.

It is commendable that staff are facilitated to lead initiatives. Individual staff members have attended subject-specific CPD and availed also of training in areas such as special educational needs (SEN), restorative practice, first aid, coding, and hair and beauty. This engagement is impacting positively on opportunities for students' learning.

The school does not provide instructional hours in line with Department Circular M29/95; currently, there is a shortfall of forty minutes per week. The school timetable should be reconfigured in line with the requirements of the Circular to ensure that the school provides a minimum of 28 hours of tuition per week.

During the evaluation, significant weaknesses were identified in the allocation of teaching resources made available to the school. A significant number of hours, which had been

allocated by the Department for special educational needs (SEN) and for supporting students for whom English is an additional language (EAL), were not being used for their intended purposes. It is strongly recommended that the allocation of resources and the provision of supports to students with additional learning needs be made in accordance with directions provided in Department Circular 70/2014.

The school provides a reasonably broad and balanced curriculum relative to its size. The school offers the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes, as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The feasibility of offering the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme is being explored currently and this is a welcome development. Consideration should be given to establishing core teams for LCA and TY to enhance cross-curricular planning.

Most classes are of mixed ability and are organised in a manner that supports student learning generally. Subject teams should make best use of mixed-ability settings to optimise student attainment. There is banding of classes in Maths, Irish and English. The creation of higher-level classes in Maths and Irish should be based on a common examination in all instances. Consideration should be given to creating mixed-ability classes in English in all year groups up to Junior Certificate level.

The school is welcoming and inclusive of all students. Commendably, a number of teachers have specialist qualifications in supporting students with additional educational needs. Students benefit from the support of special-needs assistants whose work is overseen by the SEN co-ordinator. As recommended in a previous SEN evaluation report, a detailed register of students with SEN should be established and regular meetings should be held between the SEN co-ordinator and the full SEN team. There is scope to explore team teaching as an alternative to student withdrawal for learning support.

Students with EAL are provided with additional language supports by specialist staff; systems to track and monitor their progress require enhancement. An increased number of students with EAL have enrolled recently and may be experiencing initial difficulties accessing and understanding the curriculum. The full EAL allocation should be used to provide appropriate support that includes an induction programme for new students. Specific language supports should be provided that are informed by systematic assessments of students' language levels through the use of the *Post-Primary Assessment Kit*. A core EAL teaching team and a whole-school approach to supporting students with EAL should be established.

During the evaluation, the students in attendance were well behaved and worked cooperatively with their teachers and each other. Evidence from school documentation indicates a high level of suspensions. There is an acknowledgement by staff that the current system of detention is not effective. Responses to questionnaires indicate that there is a need to review the effectiveness of policies relating to the management of students. Priority should be given to developing a code of behaviour, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, in accordance with Tusla guidelines. It is commendable that a positive-behaviour-for-learning teacher has been appointed and that whole-staff CPD in the area of behaviour management has been accessed.

Staff make effective efforts to provide a high level of care and support to students and this is a key strength of the school. An effective care team is in place. The school benefits from the services of form tutors, year heads, a guidance counsellor, a personal counsellor, a voluntary chaplain and other support personnel. A breakfast club, after-school study and tuition are all providing beneficial supports to students; more students should be encouraged to avail of these facilities. Close links with community organisations, colleges and support agencies have also been established.

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*.

### ***1.3 Management of facilities***

The management of facilities is good, but there is a need to augment classroom resources. School management has upgraded facilities, including the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. Electrical works will be upgraded as part of the summer works scheme 2016. A major philanthropic project to renovate the school canteen is due to commence. The trustees have agreed to the use of an additional green space for student recreational and educational activities. The recent updating of the health and safety statement, which includes regular fire drills, is a positive development.

It would appear that the school's financial position is impacting adversely on the provision and updating of resources and equipment to support teaching and learning in some of the practical subjects, including Science and Home Economics. This is an area that requires attention, as resources permit.

## **2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

### ***2.1 The quality of learning and teaching***

Good-quality teaching and learning was evident in most lessons, with very good practice to support learning noted in some lessons. Further attention needs to be given to strategies to enhance the quality and assessment of student learning; strategies that support differentiation, active learning and formative assessment should be further developed.

Overall, lessons were well prepared, with some very good practice observed in the choice of methodologies. Very good planning practice was noted when suitably high expectations for students were set and where the range of chosen teaching strategies were aligned carefully to the lesson intention and paced appropriately. Given the cultural diversity of the student cohort, teachers need to give further consideration as to how lessons can be linked with and built on students' prior experiences.

Learning intentions were shared with students at the start for the majority of lessons. In many instances, these intentions were stated too generally; they were not sufficiently differentiated or revisited to assess learning. Learning intentions should articulate clearly the knowledge, understanding and skills to be achieved by the end of the lesson and they should be revisited to consolidate learning

Planned learning activities were well managed in many instances and teachers were affirming of students' contributions. In some lessons, students were provided with opportunities to work independently or cooperatively. In a number of lessons, however, the main methodology used was teacher-led discussion. This approach resulted in students being relatively passive and, at times, disengaged. It is recommended that more active student-centred methodologies be adopted as standard classroom practice.

Formative assessment practice needs to be extended to support deep learning and to challenge the full range of student abilities. The questioning strategies used did not always encourage students to expand on their answers. Further use of open-ended and higher-order questions is recommended.

Teachers were observed to provide a good level of in-class monitoring of students' progress. Some very good use of comment marking was noted on students' work; there is a need to extend this good practice. Strategies that support differentiation and facilitate students to actively reflect on and assess their learning need to be deployed further in lessons, and supported through a programme of CPD for staff.

Subject departments are well established and teachers are facilitated to meet regularly. The subject plans reviewed during the evaluation provided a good description of the provision for subjects. There is scope for planning to be more developmental and strategic in nature. There was an absence of action planning and clear linkages with DEIS and SSE targets, particularly in relation to attainment, literacy and numeracy.

An analysis of trends in the examinations indicates some positive developments such as an increase in higher-level uptake and attainment in some subjects; attainment and the challenge of raising expectations remain areas for development, however. Procedures for monitoring and tracking attainment at subject-department level are currently underdeveloped.

Programme plans in the main are the remit of individual teachers; there was significant variation in the quality of the plans reviewed during the evaluation. All programme plans should be developed collaboratively by subject teams. These plans should incorporate planned learning outcomes for each topic. Specific teaching, learning and assessment strategies should be included. Planning meetings should be used to share and discuss effective practice. The DEIS planning tools should be used to support these practices.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

### ***3.1 Management***

Good progress is evident in the effective implementation of recommendations contained in the recent subject inspection report of Science. Some recommendations from previous inspection reports such as the introduction of LCA and the expanded use of ICT have been implemented.

### ***3.2 Learning and teaching***

Commendably, the main findings and recommendations from the recent subject inspection of Science were shared and discussed with the whole staff. Some recommendations from previous reports, such as the sharing of learning intentions, have been implemented; but a number of other recommendations have yet to be implemented.

It is recommended that a clear strategy be adopted to achieve the implementation of all recommendations made during inspections. It is advised that individuals are identified with responsibility to lead and achieve the necessary changes.

## **3. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

There has been some good work undertaken in respect of SSE, but the process needs to be more collaborative in nature. The school has engaged satisfactorily with the SSE process in relation to the literacy and numeracy strands of DEIS planning. Commendably, the school has identified the promotion of the student voice, with a particular focus on teaching and learning, as the third theme of SSE.

The school has taken steps to address issues relating to punctuality and attendance. There is some monitoring of student attainment and progression. Overall, a more detailed analysis is required and systematic use of data should inform all planning, monitoring and review processes. The implementation of the revised approach to DEIS planning, as outlined in this report, should enhance the quality of the SSE processes.

During the evaluation, there was evidence among school management and staff of a desire, a determination and a capacity to bring about school improvement. To do so effectively, a systematic, collaborative approach will be required. Responses to questionnaires indicate that systems to garner the views of parents, students and teachers on school planning matters are underdeveloped. More consistent incorporation of their views would contribute to a greater shared vision for school development. It is essential that a shared vision for change and school improvement be implemented by all the stakeholders.



**Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management of Saint Joseph's Secondary School welcomes the positive comments of the Inspectorate on its commitment to the future development of the school. The report recognises initiatives such as after-school study, morning assemblies, mentoring of PME students, the appointment of a positive behaviour for learning teacher and close links with the DIT and our Business in the Community partners as positive developments within the school. The report also acknowledges the engagement of staff with quality CPD, which has had a direct positive impact on student learning and on curricular provision within the school. The report further outlines the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in the school. It indicates the high level of care and support provided for students as a key strength for Saint Joseph's Secondary School. The involvement of the Student Council, prefect teams and student mentors is praised. The Board of Management welcomes this opportunity to implement a shared vision for change, development and for further school improvement.

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

Actions taken to address recommendations within the report:

- The Board of Management appointed two new parent representatives in May 2016 and is now properly constituted.
- The Board of Management has met several times with staff to discuss the report and has worked closely with staff to achieve a shared vision for the future of the school.
- The school has enrolled in the 2016/17 'Forbairt' programme, a year-long programme delivered by the PDST, to engage in whole school planning around the area of student voice in the classroom. A core team has been established and has attended several CPD sessions to date.
- The school has engaged the PDST to deliver whole school development in the areas of differentiation, active teaching and learning methodologies and assessment for learning (AfL). Initial meetings have already taken place with a core team.
- The DEIS planning programme and the third strand of SSE will be informed by the baseline data, which has been gathered by the school on the 2016/17 first year cohort. The data gathered thus far includes the CAT4 Irish normed test, the primary passport and STEN scores for all students. DEIS planning and review have been added to each agenda for the BOM and for staff.
- A review of posts has been scheduled for this term, which will be facilitated by the JMB.
- The school day has been restructured from September 2016 in line with Dept. Circular M29/95.
- The Board of Management has implemented a systematic review of policies during its meetings. The first of which is now complete (Dignity in the Workplace).
- The Board of Management now delivers a written agreed report of its work for staff and parents.
- Recommendations have been implemented regarding the allocation of resource hours.
- A core team is now in place for LCA and TY.
- Mixed-ability teaching is practiced throughout the school. In English, it has been used until now up to the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year. This practice will continue to be reviewed along with the use of common tests in Irish and Maths.

- A register for SEN students has been established.
- Meetings are now formally timetabled for the senior management team and middle management.
- The new canteen is now complete and is a wonderful resource for students.
- The EAL dept. is now using the Post Primary Toolkit and has established an individual learning plan for all EAL students.
- The code of behaviour is being reviewed and developed by all school partners with the assistance of the NBSS. A Positive Behaviour Strategy Team within the school has developed a behaviour expectations' matrix and lesson plans around positive behaviour. There have been no suspensions during this academic year to date.