

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Presentation College
Bray, County Wicklow
Roll number: 61800D**

Date of inspection: 27 September 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 September 2013 in Presentation College, Bray. 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

Presentation College Bray is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (PBST). The college was founded by the Presentation Brothers in 1921 and emphasises the importance of creating a safe, caring environment for students together with a diverse student-centred curriculum which encourages respect, responsibility and self-reliance. School management is committed to supporting parents in their role as educators.

The college has positive enrolment trends and has a current enrolment of 637 students. The college is located in the town of Bray and draws a diversity of students from Bray and the surrounding areas. A new school building with modern facilities was opened in 2011.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- The board of management is appropriately constituted and executes its statutory responsibilities in a diligent and conscientious manner.
- Department regulations require schools to provide a minimum of 28 hours instruction time. The school timetable is currently 50 minutes below this minimum.
- The senior management team provides exemplary leadership. All members of staff are empowered and entrusted to fulfil their professional responsibilities.
- There are high levels of commitment to the care and wellbeing of students coordinated by a dedicated and committed student support team.
- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons is very good, with scope for improvement in a few instances. High levels of student learning are facilitated and achieved in most lessons.
- High expectations are set for students in all aspects of their attendance, participation and attainment.
- Teachers are motivated and are dedicated professionals in their work.
- A culture of review and self-evaluation is embedded in many aspects of the college, with a strong professional capacity for self-evaluation and school improvement.

Recommendations for Further Development

- The planned curriculum review should be undertaken expeditiously to ensure that subject choice and timetable provision support students' continuity of learning from junior cycle through to senior cycle.
- The deployment of staff in a minority of cases should be examined in order to ensure that teachers are qualified and registered to teach their timetabled subjects.

1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

1.1 School ownership and management

The board of management is appropriately constituted and executes its statutory responsibilities in a diligent and conscientious manner. The board is supported in its role by the PBST to ensure effective and appropriate educational provision. Decision-making and communication processes are open and transparent. Effective planning is facilitated by the way in which the board works with the staff steering committee and senior management. Members of the board bring a complementary range of experiences and skills to their work and their diverse backgrounds contribute to overall board effectiveness.

The board has adopted mandatory policies and has met legislative requirements regarding policy formation. Effective procedures are in place for policy review. The policies developed by the board reflect its commitment to diversity and respect for the individual. Well-established practices are in place for review and evaluation of key aspects of the college's educational provision and for reporting on the operation of the college to the school community. In line with the principle of partnership, the board promotes values and welcomes the contribution of parents. The parents' association is actively involved in the life of the college on an ongoing basis.

It is clear that the board has a vision for school development and a strong commitment to school self-evaluation. Developmental priorities have been identified by the board in a consultative way and there are well-developed strategies in place to achieve these priorities. Action plans within the school improvement plan clearly set out specific targets and timeframes.

The permanent section of the school plan contains the policies governing and guiding practice. These policies are readily available to all staff in the teachers' handbook. The school improvement plan includes a list of the prioritised areas for school development and improvement with a commendable focus on supporting the student experience and learning. Learning priorities identified for the current year focus on literacy development and on assessment for learning (AfL) as prioritised components of school self-evaluation. Other priorities in support of teaching and learning include preparation for the new junior cycle framework, staff ICT training, review of posts of responsibility, review of the work of the student councils and identified policy review. All the elements of the school plan should now be collated into a single guiding document.

A literacy core team has been established. However this team does not currently have representation from the diversity of subject departments in accordance with best practice. Therefore the composition of this team should be expanded to include a diversity of subject areas. The school community demonstrates a willingness to engage with eLearning. The planned staff training in this regard is praiseworthy. Further research and consultation with the school community will enhance this initiative. A number of on-site study visits to schools with established practice should be carefully considered in advance of making final decisions to implement this initiative.

Management and staff actively promote student leadership in the college through the umbrella student council and the individual student councils which are in place for each

year group; through the prefect system; and through the new student mentoring system. Staff-student relationships support student involvement and active participation in school life.

The senior management team comprising the principal and deputy principal provide exemplary leadership. All members of staff are empowered and entrusted to fulfil their professional responsibilities. This contributes to the strong sense of community and commitment among the staff and students in the college. Both members of the senior management team have an active on-the-ground presence and jointly manage the college very effectively on a daily basis. Effective leadership for learning and teaching is founded in a commitment to excellence and quality improvement. The principal and deputy principal adopt a partnership approach to school leadership and communicate very effectively as a team. Both have a shared vision of the educational priorities for the college and actively promote the meaningful involvement of parents, which is central to the ethos.

The principal provides clear educational leadership and promotes the maintenance of a high-quality work ethic among all members of the school community. The principal has delivered on a successful agenda for change over recent years. In excess of ninety-five percent of parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the college is well run.

1.2 Effectiveness of leadership for learning

Teachers are motivated and are dedicated professionals in their work. High expectations are set for students in all aspects of their attendance, participation and attainment. Management and staff foster a positive school spirit. The exemplary pastoral care system has supported the development of well-rounded, confident and responsible students.

School management promotes leadership opportunities among staff. A substantial number of teachers have availed of the opportunity to play leading roles in key projects and initiatives. Members of staff are self-motivated and pro-active in the high quality of care and initiative they show in their work. Meaningful roles are distributed to post holders who carry out their duties effectively. Senior management creates opportunities to take on voluntary roles which build leadership capacity. In the main, teaching staff are deployed in accordance with their qualifications and expertise. However, in a minority of cases, teachers are timetabled for subjects in which they are not qualified or registered. This is not in line with Department guidelines and should be addressed by school management.

Continuing professional development (CPD) for staff is a school priority and is actively supported by school management. Staff development days are a key focus of teacher CPD. The college operates a good induction programme for new teachers and the provision of a staff handbook is very praiseworthy.

There are some exemplary subject plans underpinned by detailed schemes of work and specific learning outcomes for each year group. In other cases subject plans are less developed and focus primarily on organising the syllabus content. Therefore, further development of subject planning is necessary for some subject areas.

The broad curriculum offered is generally well aligned to support educational progression. While Technical Graphics was offered to first years in September 2013, interest among parents regarding its introduction was low and it was not introduced in the current year which is regrettable; students who opt for TY are offered a module in Design and Communications Graphics to develop their skill set in the subject should they choose it for Leaving Certificate. Junior Cycle students are offered Materials Technology Wood as an option for Junior Certificate while Construction Studies is currently not offered as a senior cycle subject. In conversation with inspectors, relevant student responses indicated a considerable interest in these subjects. Therefore, these anomalies should be addressed by

school management in the interest of continuity of learning. Physical Education is not provided for in fifth and sixth year. Curricular review should form a central strand of planning for the future. Such a review should be undertaken expeditiously to ensure that subject choice and timetable provision supports students' continuity of learning from junior cycle through to senior cycle. For some subjects, attention should be paid to the distribution of lessons over the course of the week.

Parents and students praised the quality of the TY programme for its impressive diversity and development of life skills. The high uptake of TY indicates the value placed on the programme. Student review and ongoing school evaluation of the content and relevancy of the programme is welcomed. The proposal to improve the social outreach elements of TY is praiseworthy as are the various mechanisms to improve reporting to parents. However, there is a substantial variation in the quality of subject planning specific to the TY programme. This should be addressed through further specific TY staff training.

Department regulations require schools to provide a minimum of 28 hours instruction time. The school timetable was 50 minutes below this minimum at the time of the evaluation. It is very praiseworthy that once this matter was brought to the school's attention and prior to the post-evaluation meetings, school senior management had consulted with parents, teaching staff and the board of management resulting in the class timetables for all classes being altered to give 28 hours of instruction time for all students. TY students are currently not provided with a minimum of 167 days of instruction per year due to the length of their summer break. This deficit should be addressed by school management.

A dedicated and committed student support team co-ordinates initiatives to support the care and wellbeing of students. The "Spirit of Pres" Week places appropriate focus on how the college ethos supports the well-being of the whole school community. The emphasis on recognising and acknowledging positive actions, through the merit system, is highly effective. The investment of care, particularly in the junior years, results in well-rounded, confident, responsible and mature students in senior cycle. Almost ninety-three percent of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there is a good atmosphere in the college.

There is a comprehensive guidance programme in place for all year groups including a defined guidance role to support assessment and also to provide individual, educational and personal guidance. Counselling and care strategies, including Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes, are in place to support all students.

A well-organised and co-ordinated learning support team adopts a variety of models of support in line with good practice. The programme includes a reflective approach to the adoption of standardised assessments. The college is currently implementing an efficient and effective tracking and monitoring system of student attainment.

The admissions policy reflects the characteristic spirit of the college and is grounded in the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion. Attendance and retention are monitored and organised in a systematic manner. Appropriate strategies are in place to maximise student attendance and retention.

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 new school building which was completed in 2011 has impacted very positively on the working environment for teachers and the learning environment for students. Environmental responsibility and sustainability is promoted in the maintenance and use of school facilities and resources. The planned Green Schools' initiative will further support this work. Wireless ICT provision has been put in place and innovative use of ICT in teaching and learning is supported through staff training.

2. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.1 The quality of learning and teaching

Twenty-one lessons were observed covering all years and programmes and including core, optional, practical and non-examination subjects. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good. There was scope for improvement in a small number of lessons, particularly in the use of methodologies that promote student engagement and active learning. Returns from questionnaires administered to parents and students reflected a high level of satisfaction with teaching and learning. Almost all students responded that they are encouraged to work to the best of their ability. This was evident in the lessons observed, where students demonstrated high levels of motivation and participated productively in the range of tasks presented to them. Almost all students responded that teachers check their work regularly and most reported that teachers tell them how they can improve.

In all lessons, a very positive atmosphere prevailed and a good rapport between teachers and students, and among students, was very evident. Teachers are knowledgeable of their students and hold high expectations for both their achievement and behaviour. Students' approach to their lessons and their interactions with their peers and their teachers was exemplary.

Planning and preparation was very good in almost all lessons. This included the preparation of a range of appropriate electronic resources and an array of worksheets, task sheets and materials to support students' engagement and learning. In a considerable number of lessons, teachers established the learning outcomes at the outset, with best practice observed where these were displayed and articulated in terms of what students should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. In many cases teachers revisited these learning intentions to assess students' learning and progress both during and at the end of the lesson. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.

Lessons were most effective in supporting and progressing learning when there was a clear emphasis on student activity and engagement. The most effective lessons ensured students were involved in tasks that involved both the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills. This was achieved through an appropriate balance between teacher input and student involvement in applied tasks or assignments. Good examples of self-directed learning were observed in lessons where students were required to complete relevant and purposeful tasks either independently, in pairs or in small groups. In most instances these tasks were very well constructed and challenged students to apply their prior learning and to progress their knowledge and competency in the subject area. In a small number of instances, lessons were dominated by teacher input, with little opportunity for students to engage with the topic or concepts of the lesson.

Questioning was used effectively in most lessons to develop understanding and to assess learning. Students were engaged by a mixture of lower-order and higher-order questions that were appropriately challenging. Students were encouraged to think, to reflect and to provide considered responses to questions posed. Good practice was observed where

students were willing and confident to ask questions for clarification or to enhance class discussion. In some circumstances, not all students were equally forthcoming in their responses and remained relatively passive during their lessons. The extension of the range of questioning strategies is an area that should be considered for further development.

The majority of class groups comprised students with a range of abilities. Many teachers successfully included all students through differentiating instructions, varying the level of complexity of questions, and providing some students with individual attention. This good practice should be extended to include greater use of differentiated tasks, where appropriate.

Appropriate attention was paid to the development of literacy skills in particular and to numeracy when relevant. There was good use of subject-specific terminology in most lessons. The vast majority of teachers' classrooms had good displays of subject-specific posters, charts and key words, in addition to displays of students' own work. Some teachers made explicit reference to relevant vocabulary and encouraged students to apply these in their discussions and answers to questions. The target language was effectively used by teachers in all language lessons.

High levels of student learning were facilitated and achieved in most of the lessons observed. Students displayed very good aptitude in applying their learning, whether in completing assigned tasks or experiments, in responding to questions posed, in their use of language or through solving practical problems. The most effective teachers were stimulating, inspiring and innovative in their use of technology, vocabulary, graphic organisers or independent and collaborative learning.

The range of assessment modes employed included questioning, facilitated discussion, oral feedback and in-class testing. The development of self-assessment and peer assessment would further support overall assessment strategies. Homework is regularly assigned in most subject areas as evidenced in student copybooks and homework journals. Good practice was noted where some teachers provided detailed formative feedback on students' written assignments. However, the practice of giving written formative feedback was not always evident. It is recommended that subject departments review their practice in this essential element of AfL, with a view to establishing a broader range of strategies to provide formative feedback to all students.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

3.1 Management

Good progress is evident in the effective implementation of recommendations made in previous subject inspection reports. These include capacity building in the mathematics department, strategies to increase the uptake of German, policy development in literacy and special needs education and CPD for teachers of Science. The issues in relation to the technology subjects remain unaddressed.

3.2 Learning and teaching

Teachers have attended well to the implementation of many of the recommendations made in previous subject inspection reports. Learning outcomes were mostly shared and revisited and teacher-based rooms provided print-rich displays that support the college's literacy initiative. The extension of AfL practices to all lessons, including the annotation of students' written assignments and the support of active and collaborative learning are areas for further development.

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

A culture of review and self-evaluation is embedded in many aspects of the college, with a strong professional capacity for self-evaluation and school improvement. School self-evaluation processes have been established and determined in the school improvement plan, which focus on prioritised outcomes to be achieved in targeted timeframes. It is praiseworthy that the college has placed a high priority on the implementation of recommendations from the WSE-MLL in the current academic year. The college has the capacity to bring about improvement through self-evaluation.

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 of Presentation College welcomes the extremely positive and affirmative Whole School Evaluation/Management, Leadership & Learning Report.

The Board in particular welcomes the findings that:

- The Board executes its statutory responsibilities in a diligent and conscientious manner. Decision making and communication processes are open and transparent.
- In line with the principle of partnership the Board promotes values and welcomes the contribution of parents.
- The policies developed by the board reflect its commitment to diversity and respect for the individual.
- The Parents' Association is actively involved in the life of the college on an on-going basis.
- The senior management team provides exemplary leadership.
- Teachers are motivated and dedicated professionals in their work.
- The overall quality of teaching in lessons is very good.
- Staff-student relationships support student involvement and active participation in school life.
- High expectations are set for students in all aspects of their attendance, participation and attainment.
- Management and staff actively promote student leadership in the college.
- The 'Spirit of Pres Week' places appropriate focus on how the college ethos supports the well-being of the whole school community.
- The exemplary Pastoral Care system has supported the development of well-rounded, confident, responsible and mature students.
- There is a comprehensive Guidance Programme in place for all year groups.
- A well-organised and co-ordinated Learning Support Team adopts a variety of models of support in line with good practice.
- Parents and students praised the quality of the TY Programme for its impressive diversity and development of life skills.
- Student's approach to their lessons and their interactions with their peers and their teachers was exemplary.
- A culture of review and self-evaluation is embedded in many aspects of the college, with a strong professional capacity for self-evaluation and school improvement.
- The Admissions Policy reflects the characteristic spirit of the college and is grounded in the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion.

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

"The Board of Management is committed to use recommendations from WSE/MLL to identify areas for further improvement". SIP 2013/2014.

- Curriculum review is on-going led by a Board of Management sub-committee and will address issues of continuity as part of preparation for the Junior Cycle Framework.
- The school timetable has, after consultation with teachers, parents, students and the Board of Management, been amended to allow provision of 28 hours tuition time per week for all class groups.
- The practice whereby TY students finished one week before the end of summer term will be discontinued.

- The issue of the small number of teachers deployed to teach subjects for which they are not registered is largely a legacy issue and is being dealt with as resources allow.
- All elements of the School Plan have been collated in a single document.
- Further research and consultation will take place before any decision is made regarding the introduction of eLearning.
- Exemplary subject plans will be shared among the entire teaching community.
- Membership of the Literacy Core Team has been expanded to represent a broader range of subject areas.