Whole-School Evaluation
REPORT

St Brogan’s College
Bandon, County Cork
Roll number: 70910L

Date of inspection: 25 January 2010
WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

A whole-school evaluation of St Brogan’s College was undertaken in January 2010. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement. The quality of teaching and learning in four subjects was evaluated during the evaluation and one subject was evaluated in advance. Separate reports are available on these subjects (see section 7 for details). The board of management of the school 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 Brogan’s College is a co-educational school serving a large catchment area. The school is under the trusteeship of the County Cork Vocational Education Committee (CCVEC). It currently caters for 442 post-primary students, comprising 108 females and 334 males. It also provides for the wider community through its Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) and adult education programmes.

St Brogan’s College offers the full range of second-level curricular programmes: the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school participates in the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department’s action plan for educational inclusion. The School Completion Programme (SCP) is one of the supports available to the school through DEIS.

Kinsale College of Further Education is affiliated to St Brogan’s College. A number of Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) level 5 and level 6 courses are offered in the Kinsale facility. St Brogan’s College also offers a PLC course in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and an adult education evening programme on its Bandon campus.

1.1 Characteristic spirit of the school

The school’s mission statement is written down and is well communicated to the school community. Its focus is on providing a holistic education which is achieved through the delivery of a broad curriculum complemented by a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The empowerment of students has traditionally been a priority in the school. For example, the student council has been in existence since 1987. This and the range of other developmental opportunities available to students represent the lived expression of the school’s mission statement.

Student care is a priority in the school. The translation of this aspiration from the mission statement into the daily interactions within the life of the school is well evidenced by the pastoral-care structures. The weekly tutorial period is an indicator of the school’s commitment to supporting and encouraging students as is the annual awards night which is an effective means of celebrating and recognising students’ achievements.

The school is an inclusive school. Students of all faiths and those of none are welcomed and the school has established systems and offers educational programmes intended to
provide for the needs of all students. The school celebrates the diversity of its student cohort openly. This is evident by the welcome statements and flags from the representative countries which are displayed in the entrance foyer.

### 1.2 School ownership and management

Communication mechanisms between the trustees, the board of management and in-school management are very good. CCVEC actively supports the provision of education in the school and strong links are maintained between it and the school. CCVEC receives minutes of all board of management meetings, the principal attends meetings organised by CCVEC for principals and the CEO and education officer visit the school regularly.

During the evaluation, it was stated that the key aim of CCVEC is to ‘provide and maximise opportunities for all learners’. A number of effective strategies have been developed to achieve this. For example, the CCVEC monitors teaching and learning in its schools through discussion on subject inspection reports, examination of certificate examination results and celebration of students’ achievements through its annual awards. In addition, curriculum in-service support is organised by CCVEC in the form of cluster meetings.

The board of management of St Brogan’s College is a subcommittee of CCVEC. This recently appointed board is appropriately constituted, with three CCVEC nominees, two parent and two teacher nominees. The board of management has responsibility for the work of both St Brogan’s College and Kinsale College of Further Education. However, there are no direct links between the board of management and Kinsale College of Further Education. The board can co-opt additional members who would contribute to its work. To enhance the links between the board and Kinsale College of Further Education, it is recommended that a staff member from Kinsale Further Education College be nominated as a co-opted member to the board of management.

In accordance with good practice the board meets regularly, meetings are generally well attended, and the proceedings are minuted and communicated to all members. The procedure for informing board members on matters relating to the day-to-day activities of the school is good: the principal furnishes a report at each meeting.

The board is facilitated in developing an awareness of its role and responsibility by means of CCVEC-devised guidelines for boards of management and by the fact that a number of members have served on the last board. It is very positive that the members of this new board have indicated their willingness to undertake the training planned by CCVEC.

Consultation and partnership are evident at board level. Decision-making procedures are open and clear. Communication between the chairperson of the board and the principal occurs as necessary between board meetings. Building on this is good practice it is recommended that the principal provide an annual written report on the operation of the school to the board. The board’s communication mechanisms with CCVEC are also well developed. However, there is scope for development in relation to its communication mechanisms with staff and parents. Therefore, it is recommended that an agreed report be communicated to teachers and parents following each board meeting. As a means of further developing communication between the board and parents, and as envisaged by Section 20 of the Education Act (1998), it is recommended that an annual report on the operations and performance of the school be published each year.

The board has devolved responsibility for the development of the school plan to senior management and teachers. This development is co-ordinated by a staff member. The school
has engaged in the school planning process through policy development and adoption. The board has adopted the legally required policies on admission, child protection, and safety. However, some legally required policies such as the special-educational-needs policy are still at draft stage. The board is urged to proceed to the ratification stage of these policies.

The board, in conjunction with the senior management and teachers, has identified a number of school development priorities. Of immediate concern is the review of a number of policies and in particular the finalisation of the code of behaviour which has been revised in line with the guidelines from the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB). The minutes of the board indicate that the board “looks at and comments on” the certificate examination results for each year. To assist board members in this work, it is suggested that a deeper analysis be performed on which the discussion at the board could be based. The school has done some work in relation to its participation in the DEIS programme. It is recommended that the school’s progress in relation to its DEIS action plans form part of the discussion at all board meetings.

1.3 In-school management

The principal and deputy principal have a good working relationship, and possess complementary skills that facilitate the effective management and organisation of St Brogan’s College. The principal and deputy principal see themselves as a “management unit” and time is set aside on a daily basis to facilitate them in communicating as a team. This is good practice. Their visible presence in the school helps in maintaining informal communication with students and teachers and ensures that they are accessible to the school community. Senior management, with support from staff, parents, the board, students and the community has adapted to the changing educational needs of the community. The recent introduction of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is one example of expanding the curriculum to meet students’ needs.

The diverse nature of the school’s curriculum provision, in addition to the range of initiatives in operation, means that there is need for a high degree of delegation of management-related duties. Responsibilities such as leading the introduction of new programmes and the co-ordination of the DEIS and school development planning (SDP) teams are examples of the opportunities provided to staff members. Duties are assigned to post-holders, in accordance with agreed procedures. Rotation of the duties of post-holders is central to the management strategy of the school. This is very good practice as it broadens the expertise of the staff. To continue to meet the needs of the school in the best possible way, management and teachers are encouraged to examine the current schedule of duties and prioritise the list of duties in a collaborative manner. It is desirable that each post holder furnishes the principal with a short annual written report in relation to the fulfilment of the duties of the post, the challenges, the development, the resources required, and the identification of the post-holder’s own training and support needs. The reports of the post-holders could be incorporated into the principal’s report to the board.

The allocation of posts of responsibility is based on the combined teaching resources of both St Brogan’s College and Kinsale College of Further Education. Therefore, the schedule of responsibilities should reflect the needs of both colleges. Some review is advised to ensure that this happens.

It is good that regular assistant-principal meetings are held with senior management. These are important in helping these post-holders fulfil and develop their management roles.

Good systems of internal communication are in place. These systems include staff meetings, an array of notice boards in the staff room including the principal and deputy principal’s notice board, curriculum and extracurricular notice boards, announcements at...
break times and meetings of various groups of staff at the beginning of the year. The intercom system is used to make announcements at different times throughout the school day. To avoid frequent interruption in teaching and learning, it is recommended that the school assign specific times each day for use of the intercom system. This formal communication is supplemented by ongoing informal communication, which is clearly evident in the open and friendly atmosphere that permeates through the school.

There is a culture of continuing professional development (CPD) for staff in the school. The sharing of individual teacher-generated and department-generated resources, such as those compiled by the special educational needs department is good practice and should be further encouraged.

St Brogan’s College accepts all students who apply for admission to the school. The admissions policy should be reviewed and amended to reflect the open policy of admission of students that operates in the school. The review should also ensure that all restrictive clauses are removed.

Participation in DEIS requires the development of a three-year action plan. One component of the school’s DEIS action plan is a review of the attendance policy and this work has been ongoing since 2008 with a target completion date of 2010. Documentary evidence provided by the school management suggests that the approach used in obtaining baseline data on attendance rates and patterns and in devising an action plan to enhance attendance is in line with the DEIS recommended practices. As part of this process, the DEIS and SDP teams have identified what is working well and the issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure that a fully streamlined attendance and retention system is in place. The roles of various staff members including class tutors, year heads, the home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and SCP personnel are outlined in the policy. Student attendance is monitored in an organised and systematic manner. Mechanisms include the use of e-portal, afternoon roll calls and contact with parents by SCP personnel as necessary. The school’s documentation indicates that absenteeism among students in the Transition Year (TY) programme is significantly higher than in other year groups. It is therefore recommended that the school introduce additional strategies that would further promote attendance levels, particularly in TY. For example, the development of an attendance and punctuality contract that would be signed by parents and students each year might be considered. The current strategy of introducing annual awards for full attendance for first-year students is positive.

A recently reviewed and clearly structured code of behaviour operates in parallel with the student-support system. The code of behaviour is being trialled in the current academic year and is then due for completion and ratification by the board of management.

Students’ academic progress is monitored and the school conducts an analysis of the outcomes for students in certificate examinations. Documentary evidence provided by the school management suggests that the school is exploring strategies that would further promote academic attainment and high expectations among students. This work is under the remit of the educational-attainment group established as part of the DEIS action plan. As part of the process of enhancing academic attainment, consideration could be given to the appointment of a dean of studies or to the creation of a mentoring system that would track and encourage students in their academic work.

Senior management and school staff have involved students in a partnership approach through a representative student council since 1987. This is very positive. The council creates a formal structure for the recognition of the students’ voice and a facility to support students’ involvement in the operation of the school. Effective procedures are in place for the election of members and officers. Regular meetings take place. In line with good
practice, it is suggested that an agenda be circulated to all council members in advance. It is good to note that a constitution for the student council has been devised. While acknowledging the support and guidance of the liaison teacher, it is recommended that formal training be sought for the members of the council to further enhance the students’ understanding of their role. To further increase the students’ input into the governance of the school, it is recommended that procedures be put in place to ensure that the student council is provided with the opportunity to have formal input into the development of school policies to a greater extent, in particular those that directly affect students’ experiences in the school. Contact is maintained with the student body through the representatives. Building on this good practice, it is suggested that the student council use its notice board more effectively as a means of further communicating with the general student body. The proposed student zone on the school’s website could also be used as a communication tool. Officers and members of the student council demonstrated a high level of maturity, leadership, loyalty to and interest in their school.

Parents are actively engaged in the school through their involvement with the parents’ association and in other activities. The members of the parents’ association demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm for their work. They indicated that they have a positive relationship with school personnel and were particularly appreciative of the staff that provided input at their meetings. They expressed overall satisfaction with the education received by the students and were appreciative of the care, dedication and commitment of teachers to co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The organisation of a table quiz in which teachers, students and parents participate is one example of the partnership approach that pertains in the school.

There is effective and ongoing communication with parents encompassing all aspects of school life. Annual formal parent-teacher meetings are organised and the school also facilitates the provision of information on individual students’ progress to parents when required. It is noteworthy that the school has recently implemented a texting service to streamline communication between school and home. This is particularly useful in monitoring attendance.

The school’s comprehensive website provides an effective forum for dissemination of information regarding the school. School management intends to develop the website further to encourage greater use by students. It is suggested that the student council could have a role in the development of the proposed students’ zone.

Effective links have been established between the school, appropriate outside agencies and the community. The school makes good use of its links with local clubs such as the local soccer and rugby clubs to enhance students’ experiences of these sports. Documentary evidence provided by school management suggests that TY students are involved in a paired reading scheme with students in the local primary school. This is a positive initiative.

1.4 Management of resources

The timetables made available to the inspection team indicated that the teaching allocation is being used appropriately in the main. The allocation for Guidance to the school is based on the enrolment in both St Brogan’s College and Kinsale College of Further Education. However, it is unclear if any of the guidance allocation is being used by Kinsale College of Further Education. This needs to be clarified by CCVEC. In addition, its use in St Brogan’s College is not clear. The school should ensure that the full guidance allocation is used in an appropriate manner, providing for the needs of the students in both colleges. Teachers are generally deployed according to their qualifications, skills and interests and due cognisance is taken of the needs of the school and of its students. A small minority of permanent
whole-time teachers have less than the minimum number of class contact hours required by the Department. It is recommended that all teachers be timetabled for, at least, the minimum number of hours each week as stipulated in the relevant circular letters.

The enhancement of the physical infrastructure of the school to meet the needs of the expanding school population is an ongoing priority for St Brogan’s College. The current building which was opened in 1980 was at that time very well-equipped and modern. The school continued to develop and maintain its infrastructure as necessary. In the early 1990s the school was granted an extension and two extra classrooms were added. Since the middle of the 1990s, the school has undergone regular refurbishment. The construction of a new sports hall in 2000 is a particularly beneficial facility for the provision of Physical Education (PE) for the students. More recently, a new canteen shop was constructed, new canteen flooring was laid and new seating was purchased. The school’s office area was extended, the home economics room was modernised and the science laboratories and demonstration room were completely refurbished. As an element of its ongoing renovation work, the school has applied for financial support under the summer-works scheme to replace the windows. Management and staff undertook a significant amount of work to ensure the successful implementation of these projects and the outcomes of these efforts are very good.

School accommodation is maintained to a good standard, and is utilised well in addressing the needs of the school community. The material resources available in the school are appropriate and up-to-date. Specialist rooms are used for their designated purpose. Subject departments are well-resourced. In the main, teachers have made great efforts in creating and maintaining an attractive and stimulating learning environment. This is achieved by the use of posters, visual displays, and different media for the presentation of materials. Students’ accomplishments in sporting and cultural realms are celebrated through the display of photographs, trophies and awards. This supplements the positive learning atmosphere in the school. A vibrant learning environment has been created in the school’s library. The updating of the library resources is an ongoing project. Library stock is organised into junior fiction, senior fiction, and other literary genre sections, with some curricular subjects also represented.

In addition to the school’s own outdoor playing pitch and hard-court area, the school has developed links with the local sports clubs who facilitate the school by allowing use of their facilities in addition to providing coaching support in some instances. This close cooperation with the local community to augment the facilities available for student activities is very positive.

The school has been very successful in acquiring additional resources to meet the physical and educational requirements of students with special educational needs. Students have access to assistive technology such as laptop computers. Soundfields have been inserted into two rooms to assist students who have a hearing impairment. A fine range of resources is stored in a number of small offices. However, due to a shortage of space, a significant number of one-to-one and small-group withdrawal classes take place in the canteen area. This is not ideal for a number of reasons. First, the location is prone to distractions. Second, pair work or group activities involving students’ oral communication are not suited to this setting. Third, teacher resources such as key word charts and whiteboards cannot be used to support students’ learning. A centre which provides a visually stimulating environment, the possibility of displaying students’ work and hosts appropriate teaching resources, including ICT is a more appropriate learning environment for the intended target group. Therefore, it is recommended that the school pursue the acquisition of alternative accommodation that would address these matters. One approach that could go somewhat towards addressing the problem with regard to space would be the greater use of team teaching.
The school has developed an effective information and communication technology (ICT) system to which management and staff have access for administration, preparation of material, teaching and student support. The school has very good facilities, which include a number of interactive whiteboards, to enable the use of ICT for teaching and learning. The system and the facilities are co-ordinated by two post-holders, each with different responsibilities. Some very good use of this technology was observed in supporting students’ learning during the subject inspections that were carried out as part of this evaluation. All members should be encouraged to use the ICT available as a teaching and learning tool to a greater extent, in line with the objective as stated in the school plan.

It is positive that an ICT plan has been devised. This provides a coherent framework for the development of ICT in the school. It includes a programme of work for students’ learning and a vision for the whole-school use of ICT. Short-term and long-term priorities have been identified. These developments represent good practice.

Staff and management of St Brogan’s College demonstrate a proactive approach to health and safety. Clear guidelines on the management of health and safety issues have been devised. An appropriate and up-to-date safety statement and management plan, based on a risk assessment, has been prepared by the school and communicated to all staff. Visitors and students are made aware of the school’s approach to health and safety by means of the visible signed statement that is displayed on the wall inside the front door. In accordance with guidelines issued by CCVEC, the school has a safety officer and safety committee. The school takes ongoing cognisance of health and safety issues. For example, two fire drills take place each year, a safety audit was carried out in 2009 and a significant number of staff are qualified in first aid and have been trained in the use of a defibrillator. This is very good practice.

The development of environmental awareness is an important aspect of students’ learning experiences in TY. The school is currently working towards attaining its third green flag. Tasks undertaken to-date include litter and waste reduction, and the decrease of energy usage and costs. Currently, students are examining the usage of water in the school. The commitment of the students and staff to enhancing their environment is very positive.

2. QUALITY OF SCHOOL PLANNING

2.1 The school plan

It is clear that St Brogan’s College has participated in the process of school development planning (SDP) for a considerable length of time. The school has shown itself to be inclusive in relation to this process. Documentary evidence provided by school management indicates that staff members are engaged with the process and the students and parents have also participated in the development of a number of policies. This whole-school approach is good and should be utilised to a greater extent. A number of school-development-planning teams are in place. Currently, these are leading the review of the code of behaviour and examining student attendance.

The focus of SDP since 2008 has been on DEIS planning. DEIS teams have been established more recently and these are focusing on educational attainment, partnership, literacy and attendance. Documentary evidence provided by school management suggests that a substantial amount of baseline data was collected during the academic year 2008/2009 and that targets, action plans and some evaluative strategies have been identified in the four areas. The processes around DEIS planning, along with implementation of the emerging plan, have real potential to help shape this school’s vision for the future. However, to maximise the impact of the current plan over its three-year cycle strong
leadership will be required. In particular, whole-school approaches in the targeted areas need to be actively developed. Greater use of recognised, structured DEIS planning templates, and an increased focus on developing evaluation strategies are also recommended within this planning process.

The development of a whole-school policy on literacy and numeracy is recommended. This could comprise one element of the DEIS team’s work on literacy and numeracy. It is suggested that the school utilise the online support provided by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS) as a support in this work.

Very good work has been done on the recently revised school plan. This work was led by the school-planning co-ordinator. The structure of the school plan is clearly delineated into a permanent section which elucidates the established features of the school and a developmental section, in which developmental priorities are conveyed. The inclusion of previous Inspectorate evaluation reports in the school plan is noted as good practice as they provide a useful guide for development in specific subjects and programmes. The school plan should be made available to all stakeholders. Therefore, it is recommended that a copy of the school plan be available in the staffroom, board members be provided with an electronic copy of the plan and the permanent section of the plan be uploaded onto the school’s website.

Commendably, a number of student-support and organisational policies have been devised and are contained in the school plan. These include the admissions policy, the homework policy, the critical incident policy and the pastoral care policy, all of which have been prioritised for review by June 2011. In addition some policy documents viewed contained a ratification date. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to all policies. In addition, as policies are revised, a planned review date should also be included. Given the increasing enrolment of girls in the school, it is recommended that the school develop a policy with regard to gender mainstreaming. Some policies such as the data protection policy, the policy on the use of information and communication technology and the policy on the use of closed-circuit television systems have been devised and ratified by CCVEC. Overtime the school should review these policies and adapt them to the specific context or needs of the school.

It was evident from a review of subject-department planning documentation that the school supports subject-department planning. The position of co-ordination is rotated among subject-department members as is good practice. Subject-specific plans and common programmes of work have been developed using an agreed template. However, there is variation in the level of engagement with subject planning. Best practice was observed where the programmes of work were developed using an integrated approach to planning which includes teaching strategies, learning activities, assessment modes and resources in addition to content. It is advised that all departments ensure that programmes of work are developed in line with these subject-planning practices.

Confirmation was provided that, in compliance with Post-primary Circulars M44/05 and 0062/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-primary Schools (Department of Education and Science, September 2004). Confirmation was also provided that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.
3. **QUALITY OF CURRICULUM PROVISION**

3.1 **Curriculum planning and organisation**

The curriculum on offer in St Brogan’s College reflects the school’s mission statement and provides for a broad range of students’ interests and needs. This is clear from the number and range of programmes and subjects offered in the school. The subject range includes the more traditional academic subjects along with the practical and vocational oriented subjects.

The subjects on the curriculum are in line with Department circulars and the *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools* in almost all instances. However, Physical Education (PE) is an exception as the subject is timetabled for just one class period per week in third year and there is no PE provision for sixth-year students. School management has identified the need to deliver PE to all students within a curriculum review at senior cycle. This is one of the developmental priorities to be completed by Easter 2011. The appropriate provision of PE to all students is strongly recommended.

The provision for subjects at all levels is good. Taking cognisance of the subject-sampling system in first year, the time allocation for all subjects is broadly speaking satisfactory and the distribution of lessons across the week is good in almost all instances. Double lesson periods are timetabled for all subjects which have a practical element.

The arrangements for allocating students to class groups are good and reflect the school’s context. First-year and TY classes are mixed ability. In other year groups there is one streamed top-ability class and two mixed-ability classes. However, the concurrent timetabling in second and third years in Irish, Mathematics, English, History and Geography facilitates all students in achieving at highest possible level and allows the organisation of a JCSP class group for these subjects. This is very good practice. Leaving Certificate students are also facilitated in the study of Irish, Mathematics and English at their appropriate level by concurrent timetabling.

The school should plan for the increasing enrolment of female students in terms of curriculum provision. Strong consideration should be given to the development of a curriculum policy that would incorporate current and future curriculum needs. The policy should examine how optional subjects are provided and, in particular, the rationale for placing optional subjects such as Technical Graphics as core elements in the curriculum. A curriculum team could be put in place to lead this work.

Senior management demonstrates a very substantial level of support for JCSP. This is evident by, for example, the involvement of the deputy principal as a teacher in the programme and as a member of the core team. In addition a dedicated room with visual displays of JCSP posters and key word lists, which were also evident in a number of other rooms, provide evidence of the school’s commitment to JCSP methodologies. The programme was implemented for the first time in the school for second-year students in September 2008 and currently there is a class group in both second year and third year. Management of the implementation of JCSP is undertaken by a co-ordinator and core team. This is good practice.

The phased approach to the implementation of the JCSP was beneficial because it provided the opportunity to consolidate the methodologies among a small core teaching team in the initial stages. The subsequent broadening of the teaching team is good practice as it further
develops the expertise available in the school and thus enhances support for these students. The inclusion of an additional subject, Science, in the JCSP programme is positive and is another example of the school’s commitment to the programme. The school should explore the possibility of extending the subject range offered as part of the JCSP programme to the optional subjects, given that these subjects are taught in mixed-ability settings and already have among their students those who are following the JCSP and those who are not. The use of the JCSP teaching methodologies should be extended and incorporated into all subjects in junior cycle. This would thus further support JCSP students in their learning.

A comprehensive planning folder has been developed for JCSP. This provides evidence of a good level of co-ordination. Termly subject plans for the JCSP subjects have been included in the folder. These vary in the level of detail. Best practice was observed where learning outcomes/learning targets, methodologies, resources and assessment were outlined for each topic. Students are selected for JCSP in second year based on set criteria which reflect the accepted national criteria for admission into JCSP and which include students’ academic performance in first year, difficulties with literacy and numeracy, level of attendance and risk of early school leaving. This is positive. One of the key features of JCSP is the use of profiling statements and associated learning targets. The school is showing good practice in this regard as indicated by the record of students’ completed statements. The JCSP initiatives used by the school to date have focused on the development of students’ literacy. These include ‘The Reading Challenge’ and ‘Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire’. Documentary evidence provided by school management suggests that the school plans to extend the range of initiatives, to include those based on the development of numeracy during this academic year and progress towards the use of subject-specific initiatives in the future. It is recommended that the school proceeds with the implementation of these initiatives.

Documentary evidence provided by school management suggests that following an LCA inspection in 2006, a core team was put in place to assist the co-ordinator in the planning of LCA. This is good practice. While acknowledging that minutes have been retained for a small number of meetings, it is recommended that minutes be recorded of the decisions taken at all meetings. During the LCA evaluation, the further development of a base room for LCA students in which student work could be displayed was recommended. However, LCA ownership of the allocated room was not evident. In the interests of acknowledging student achievement student work should be displayed in this room. In addition educational posters that support student learning in the various modules should be displayed as appropriate. Appropriate selection criteria assist in targeting students for entry into the programme. Timetabling of modules, including work experience, is appropriate in almost all instances. However, Guidance in the LCA programme does not receive its appropriate allocation. This matter should be resolved as a matter of urgency. In addition to the timetabled weekly-period of Guidance in fifth year, Guidance should also be timetabled for one period each week in sixth year. The timetabling of personal reflection is positive as it facilitates the further enhancement of personal and interpersonal skills in line with the philosophy of the programme. In accordance with the school’s good practice in other Leaving Certificate programmes, consideration should be given to the use of students’ inputs into the selection of the vocational specialisms and elective modules. The development of an LCA general information folder is good practice. However, it is recommended that plans of all modules be devised and included in the planning folder. The LCA modular-plans should be developed based on learning outcomes.

The TY programme is a core element of the school’s education provision and it successfully provides students with a broad educational experience. The programme is balanced and contains core, subject sampling, modular and calendar components in line with good practice. Sampling of Leaving Certificate subjects comprises the subject sampling element and modules in areas such as Tourism and Safety are also timetabled.
This is praiseworthy. The provision of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is beneficial to the students as it supports personal development. In keeping with TY philosophy, a fine range of experiential activities and approaches such as work experience and Dragon’s Den are also elements of the programme. Particularly noteworthy is the production of Brogan’s Best, a school magazine documenting events throughout the year. The work involved provides students with the opportunities to undertake leadership roles in a range of areas including editing and design and marketing and facilitates the development of teamwork skills. The inclusion of an array of alternative modes of assessment, for example the TY diary, the student portfolio, student interview, behaviour and attendance is good practice as it reflects students’ participation and achievement in the TY programme to a greater extent than an over reliance on summative assessment. On completion of the programme, students receive TY certificates which are awarded at levels of pass, merit, distinction or excellence. Students’ successes are celebrated at the annual TY awards night. This is good practice.

Extensive TY planning folders have been developed and provide evidence of the work involved in the effective co-ordination of the programme. Written plans devised for each module, based on a common planning template, form a significant element of this planning documentation in almost all instances.

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is well established in the school. Support for the implementation of the programme from school management is good, as evidenced by the appropriate timetabling of the link modules and the provision of ab initio language classes. Good links have been developed with local businesses and enterprises. A comprehensive LCVP file has been developed. It is recommended that written curricular plans for the link modules and the ab initio language module be devised and included in the LCVP folder. A core team of teachers is involved in the delivery of the link modules and this team includes the programme co-ordinator. The planning documentation provided indicates that co-ordination involves a range of duties, including the organisation of formal meetings which are held intermittently. It is recommended that minutes of all formal meetings be compiled and retained in the folder. There is evidence that the students retain their work-experience diaries from Transition Year for use in the LCVP. This is not appropriate. To fulfil the requirements of participating in the LCVP, only diaries devised during work experience undertaken during the LCVP should be used as elements of LCVP work. It is strongly recommended that the practice be ceased forthwith.

Kinsale Further Education College, which was established sixteen years ago to provide a range of Post Leaving Certificate courses, is affiliated to St Brogan’s College. The college director is an assistant principal and reports to the principal and board of management of St Brogan’s College. The procedures for reporting on the work of the college need to be further developed. It is therefore recommended that the principal visit the Kinsale campus and meet the staff on a regular basis. This would ensure that the college there is integrated under the management structure of St Brogan’s College and further facilitate the development of relationships and communication. The courses on offer in Kinsale College of Further Education are innovative in their nature and theory underpins the practical learning experiences in all courses. The management of the college utilises the cultural, social, historical and ecological context of the location in developing its curriculum. Management is constantly extending the opportunities available to students and plans to introduce a hotel and catering course in September 2010. This course is another example of the college’s commitment to using local resources as Kinsale is known for the development of the culinary arts. It is planned that work experience will be organised by linking with the local restaurants.

An extensive evening programme of adult education has been the hallmark of St Brogan’s College for many years. However, the programme has been significantly reduced this year.
due to loss of the post for adult education. The arrangements in place to continue the programme this year are commended.

3.2 Arrangements for students’ choice of subjects and programmes

Students attending St Brogan’s College are provided with a wide and open choice of programmes, subjects and levels, within the limitations of the resources available. This approach is once again consistent with the school’s mission statement. Management’s and staff’s commitment to meeting the needs of individual students is demonstrated by, for example, the willingness to amalgamate the fifth-year and sixth-year classes in Chemistry in the current year due to low uptake of the subject.

The system of subject choice that operates in senior cycle is designed to maximise students’ access to the subjects offered on the school’s curriculum. Initially, prospective fifth-year students are provided with a list of subjects and are requested to choose, in order of preference, the subjects they would like to study for the Leaving Certificate examination. Student preferences are then used to create ‘best fit’ subject blocks. Students make their final subject selection from these blocks. This ‘student driven model’ is very good practice as it is based on students’ needs and interests. However, students entering second year choose their optional subjects for Junior Certificate from pre-set subject-blocks. It is recommended that a ‘student driven model’ also be considered for selection of optional subjects for Junior Certificate.

The subject-sampling programmes, which operate in first year and Transition Year, assist students in making informed decisions relating to subjects and levels. This, along with the open approach to subject choice for Leaving Certificate is positive, as both approaches seek to put the students first. They also support equality of access to all subjects for boys and girls, another positive feature of the school’s arrangements for subject choice. Following decisions made with regard to subjects, and within a reasonable timeframe, the school exercises a fine degree of flexibility in the case of students who seek to change an optional subject.

Students and their parents are afforded support and assistance in selecting subjects for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate and in choosing between the LCVP, LCA and Leaving Certificate options. Comprehensive guidance is provided to students and parents in assisting them in choosing programmes and subjects, including information on the implications of these choices. Parents are given appropriate, timely and comprehensive information on the options available and are included in the choice process with their children. This includes written documentation such as the TY guidelines and options for Leaving Certificate nights.

3.3 Co-curricular and extracurricular provision

Co-curricular and extracurricular provision is an area of noticeable strength in the school. The very extensive range of both sets of activities provided is consistent with the school’s commitment to providing a holistic education that develops the talents of the students. This involves a great investment of effort by the school and apart from the nurturing of individual students’ talents it leads to the development of positive relationships among teachers and students.

Co-curricular activities include outdoor pursuits, subject-based fieldtrips, ‘Build a Bank’ competition, debating and ‘Song School’. Visiting speakers also further enhance students’ learning experiences. An important aspect of students’ educational experiences in St Brogan’s College is personal development and the development of community awareness.
Activities such as the Gaisce awards and the design and creation of Christmas cards facilitate this development. TY students take part in local events such as Christmas Lights.

The characteristic spirit outlined in the school plan clearly elucidates the college’s ‘huge commitment to sport, particularly to Gaelic Games’. Participation in a range of sports is encouraged and students can partake in these sports, on a recreational and competitive basis. The school has experienced sporting success in these areas over the years. The commitment and dedication of staff is demonstrated by their willingness to give of their time; even in the morning before school starts, to train the students.

The range and quality of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities provided by the school complements the formal curriculum. Members of the student council expressed their satisfaction with the level of co-curricular and extracurricular activities on offer in the school. Management and staff are congratulated on the provision of such educational experiences that assist in the holistic development of the students in their care.

4. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SUBJECTS

4.1 Planning and preparation

The quality of subject planning, both collaborative and individual, was found to be very good in almost all the subjects evaluated. Subject departments are well established. In all the subject areas evaluated a subject co-ordinator is in place with the position rotating amongst the members of the department. In the case of the technological subjects it is recommended that an overall co-ordinator for all the technologies be considered. Subject department meetings are held on a regular basis with good recording practices in place. The maintenance of an electronic record of subject meetings and the inclusion of these records in the subject folder is recommended in some subjects as a means of building on the good practice already in evidence.

It is evident that the existence of well-established subject-department structures has facilitated collaboration among teachers and the advancement of good quality subject department planning. Examples of the specific plans made by subject departments include: the introduction of JCSP methodologies, the integration of ICT into teaching and learning, the implementation of imminent syllabus changes and provision for the subject in the TY programme. It is also clear that, through collaboration, subject departments have developed many useful resources to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The planned use of a shared electronic resource folder in some subjects should be progressed. The subject plans are of good quality. In keeping with good practice some plans contained future priorities for the subject along with reflections on progress to date and on possible future strategies. In a number of subject areas inspectors recommended that teaching methodologies be included in subject plans and that planned learning should be expressed in the form of learning outcomes. A focus on whole-school guidance planning is recommended to advance the overarching collaborative work in the area of Guidance and support for students with additional educational needs.

Individual teachers’ planning and preparation for lessons was also observed to be very good. Teachers used materials prepared in advance to enhance teaching and support students’ learning. These materials included information sheets, work sheets, acetate sheets, maps, photographs, flash cards and presentations using ICT. In all subject reports the level of planning and preparation for lessons was praised for its value in encouraging active engagement and participation by students in lessons.
4.2 Learning and teaching

The quality of teaching and learning was found to be good. High quality preparation for lessons meant that lessons were well structured in the main, with content being presented in a coherent manner. Lesson content was clearly communicated in many lessons, with good explanations facilitating students’ understanding of the concepts being explored. Teachers demonstrated very good knowledge of their subjects and, where relevant, a high level of skill in working with materials. In many lessons, creative use was made by teachers of local and current affairs to add immediacy to the topics being explored. Teachers emphasised the creation of connections for students by referencing everyday life experiences in the delivery of topics, thereby supporting students’ overall understanding and learning.

In almost all lessons the plan for the lesson was shared with students, and this included the identification by teachers of learning intentions and intended learning outcomes. This very good practice is recommended in all lessons. In the main lessons were appropriately paced. Where pacing was identified as inappropriate, it was recommended that sufficient time be provided to ascertain and consolidate students’ learning in advance of progressing to a new topic. A range of resources was integrated effectively into lessons and thereby enhanced the learning environment. The availability and use of ICT such as data projectors, interactive whiteboards and computer aided design (CAD) software packages is particularly positive. There were some good examples of the use of worksheets to provide appropriate challenges to students, thus avoiding an over-reliance on textbooks.

Overall, teaching methods were varied and effective. Students’ learning was enhanced in a number of lessons through the introduction of visual stimuli. Where appropriate, a combination of whole-class instruction, demonstrations, and one-to-one or small-group instruction to students was used to support students’ completion of an assigned task. The latter provided ample opportunity for teachers to provide for the learning of individual students through differentiation of instruction and task. This is very good practice. In theory lessons, teacher inputs tended to be interspersed with student activity. In some instances, where whole-class teacher-directed teaching prevailed, it was suggested that teachers extend the type of methodologies used in lessons and adopt greater variety in their teaching approaches. A focus on key terminology and literacy was central to the teaching and learning in some lessons and this was welcomed. In some mixed-ability settings inspectors encouraged teachers to pay particular attention to the further development of students’ literacy and numeracy skills. Team teaching was observed in a number of lessons. In such instances the two teachers were equally involved in the teaching of the class and in providing individual support to students, with teachers moving seamlessly between their teaching and assisting roles. This approach to team teaching is very good.

Question and answer sessions were used effectively to create links with material covered in previous lessons, to develop lesson content during lessons, and to ascertain students’ learning. In many instances, the quality of teachers’ questioning used was found to be very good, with an effective mixture of lower-order and higher-order questions. Students were given sufficient time to answer and were prompted by the teacher to develop their responses. Students’ answers were appropriately affirmed. Students’ responses to questions showed an ability to respond well, together with a clear understanding of the topics being explored. In some instances it was found that teachers could have built on students’ understanding by the use of more open questions, by encouraging students to explain and justify their thinking, and by the greater exploitation of the learning potential of incorrect answers.

Classroom management was effective. In the main, students’ practical activities were organised effectively and, where relevant, attention was given to appropriate safety precautions during practical activities. Classroom atmosphere was very positive. A good,
and in some instances very good, teacher-student rapport was evident in classroom interactions. The good interpersonal atmosphere was further enhanced by displays of students’ work and other subject-related materials. This is good practice.

Various elements of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies were in evidence in many of the lessons visited. These included communicating the learning objective of the lesson, a review of learning at the end of the lesson, the use of show me cards, red/green cards and steps to success. It was suggested that these and other similar strategies be considered for implementation on a greater scale. The incorporation of peer assessment as part of teaching and learning was observed where students were required to identify significant relevant points in the written answers of one of their classmates. This is very positive.

When questioned students generally demonstrated an appropriate level of knowledge of subject areas. Students were well organised and purposeful in their work, both written and practical, and the quality of this work indicated good progress that was appropriate to students’ levels and abilities.

4.3 Assessment

The assessment of students begins prior to entry. The results of psychometric assessments are compiled collaboratively by the special educational needs department and the guidance department. These results are used to inform the composition of mixed-ability classes and to identify students who may have additional needs. Further diagnostic assessments are carried out by the special educational needs department to clarify those needs and to aid decisions regarding the allocation of special educational needs resources. This is good practice.

Formal assessments are subsequently carried out at Christmas for all students and also at the end each school year for non-certificate examination classes. ‘Mock’ examinations are arranged for third-year students and sixth-year students in the early spring prior to the official examinations. Regular class tests are administered to all classes and provide good evidence of students’ progress. The analysis of the questions posed in tests was noted to be part of some lessons following the tests. Other strategies that facilitated students’ self-evaluation included the administration of aptitude tests to TY students, the review of learning prior to the end of lessons and the use of peer assessment among students. Where observed, such strategies were commended by inspectors and recommended for more widespread use.

Evidence of the use of formative assessment was noted and deemed positive by inspectors during many lessons. Such strategies include ongoing collaboration between the student and teacher in identifying what the student needs to learn and how learning may be achieved. The use of homework in support of formative assessment and its appropriate use were observed during many lessons. In some subjects means by which formative assessment might be better integrated with the summative examinations were suggested. These included the use of common tests across year groups, the aggregation of the results of assessments of portfolios, notebooks and tests and the use of positive comments in copybooks regarding students’ progress. Where these approaches were observed, they were identified as being very good practice.

The annual comparison of the school’s achievements in the certificate examinations with the national norms is good practice.
5. **QUALITY OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

5.1 **Inclusion of students with additional educational needs**

In St Brogan’s College students with special educational needs participate actively in all programmes offered in the school. A range of strategies is employed to cater for the needs of these students. These include withdrawal from lessons for extra support, team teaching in the classroom and the allocation of special-needs assistants. In addition a special class, Rang Íosaif, catering for students with moderate learning disabilities was established in 1993 and it continues to provide high quality support for students in this category.

The implementation and organisation of support for students with special educational needs is directed by a co-ordinator, who has a post of responsibility for the task. A core team has been put in place to assist in the co-ordination. Extensive planning folders have been developed to help in the management of the provision for students with special educational needs. However, the task of co-ordination is made difficult by the fact that the co-ordinator is heavily timetabled to teach in mainstream classes and has only one period of class contact in the special educational needs department each week. While acknowledging whole-school staffing constraints, it is nevertheless recommended that the co-ordinator’s contact time within the department be increased.

A number of the learning support and resource teachers are appropriately qualified and have significant experience in the delivery of support. Notwithstanding this, a very large number of teachers, approximately thirty, have been assigned to assist in the delivery of learning support and resource teaching. Some of these teachers have very limited class-contact time in learning support or resource teaching across the week, being timetabled from just one to four class periods. This is not good practice and the establishment of a smaller core-teaching team is recommended. Ideally, this team should be composed of self-selected teachers, who are interested in the delivery of learning support and who are appropriately qualified or who are committed to obtaining the necessary training and qualifications designed to assist and support them in their work. Despite the large number of teachers involved, it is clear from documentation provided by school management that every effort is made by the co-ordinator to have the same teacher administering support to each individual student. Similar efforts are made to match the students’ needs with the expertise of the available staff. This is positive. In instances where support is provided by more than one teacher in a specific subject area, collaboration among the teachers is necessary so that a co-ordinated approach can be adopted.

It is recommended that, as far as possible, the construction of the timetable for special educational needs take place when the main timetable for the school is being drawn up. Collaboration between management and the co-ordinator during the time-tabling process would assist in the delivery of optimal provision for special educational needs students. It would also facilitate the establishment of a smaller core-teaching team.

Team teaching was introduced as one of the modes of delivering support to students with special educational needs in September 2007 as part of a pilot project under the auspices of CCVEC. Documented evidence provided by school management suggests that in senior cycle it operates on the basis that one teacher directs the class while the other teacher supports the students. In junior cycle, the teachers share instruction. This latter methodology is good practice and the school is urged to adopt this model of team teaching to a greater extent. Team teaching was initially introduced into English and mathematics classes, but has since been extended to other subject areas. This is very good practice. As participants of the pilot project, the school conducted an analysis of the effectiveness of team teaching using student and parent questionnaires. The responses from both target
groups were favourable towards team teaching as a means of providing additional support to students.

The curriculum for students in Rang Íosaif has been developed based on the students’ needs. Currently the subjects provided include English, Mathematics, Art and Crafts, PE and Cooking. The students also participate in work experience. Integration with mainstream students is facilitated by means of a number of joint activities and this is beneficial to both the students of Rang Íosaif and the mainstream students, in that it assists in the development of their interpersonal and social skills. First-year and second-year students from the mainstream take a number of lessons of Religion with Rang Íosaif. The Social Integration module in which TY students work with students from Rang Íosaif is another very good example of inclusion and provides the TY students with concrete experiences in developing an understanding of people with special needs. This successful modular programme includes topics such as getting to know you, role play, board games, table etiquette, craft work and food preparation.

The special educational needs department supports mainstream subject teachers in their work. The school’s internal expertise has been used to develop and disseminate material to mainstream teachers in relation to the most effective strategies for enhancing the learning opportunities for a range of students’ additional needs. For example, teaching tips for enhancing the learning experiences of students with visual impairment are outlined in the school plan. Teaching strategies to support the learning experiences of other students with special needs are also documented in one of the extensive special educational needs folders. To extend this support further, it is suggested that a member of the special educational needs core team attends subject department meetings occasionally to share best practice.

Early identification of students with special educational needs is a positive feature and the school’s procedures in this regard represent good practice. Relevant information is obtained prior to students’ entry and this includes the results obtained in the pre-entry assessment test. In addition students’ reading ages are compiled as they move through junior cycle with a view to ascertaining their progress. There is evidence of good practice of the development of individual educations plans. Building on this good work, the templates used for the individual educations plans should be extended to facilitate individual teachers in outlining the implications of each student’s learning needs in each subject and the strategies that could be used to address those needs.

This school is well advanced in the development of a register of the students with special educational needs. Considerable work has been done in compiling information detailing the additional hours of support provided to each student, the teachers and the subjects involved. This is positive. With some additional information this could be developed into a student register which would serve to inform and guide all staff in their engagements with individual students. Additional information could include an outline of students’ learning styles and strengths, the progress made and when further progress will be reviewed and by whom.

Special-needs assistants were observed to play a key role in caring for and supporting students’ in their learning in St Brogan’s College. Their interest in, care for and knowledge of their students, as expressed by the team, is praiseworthy. It is good to note that the role of the special-needs assistants is clearly outlined in school documentation as this provides clear guidelines for the special-needs assistants in their work.

The special educational needs policy is in draft form. The roles and responsibilities of the special educational needs co-ordinator, the learning-support teacher and the resource teacher in addition to those of management, subject teachers and special-needs assistants are outlined in the policy. This good practice is in accordance with the National Council for
Special Education (NCSE) guidelines 2005. The draft policy for special educational needs should be extended in line with the Department’s publication *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines*. For example, the written policy should specify circumstances in which students with special educational needs may be withdrawn from mainstream and the school’s arrangements for allocating resources for teaching and learning. In addition, the roles of parents and students should also be included in the policy. The school is urged to proceed with the process leading to the ratification of the policy.

A range of effective supports, including activities to enhance inclusion, is in place to assist students for whom English is an additional language. The school has seen a significant increase in the numbers of these students in recent years. The school recognises these students as a distinct group with specific educational needs. A comprehensive folder containing resources, a language acquisition plan at three levels of language attainment and starter materials for students has been developed. This is good practice. Language acquisition strategies are documented in the school plan and the school is encouraged to implement these strategies. Documentary evidence suggests that assessment of students’ understanding of English is undertaken in order to ascertain students’ needs. This is good practice. The role of various members of staff in supporting these students is outlined in the school plan. Of particular note is the documented strategy of assigning a *buddy*, from the student’s own country if possible, as a mentor during the settling in period. The school’s inclusive approach to these students is evident on entering the building as flags and welcome statements celebrating the multicultural background of the school’s students are clearly displayed. Some teachers have attended in-service in this area organised by the Second Level Support Service (SLSS). Given the school’s work to-date, consideration should be given to working towards the acquisition of the yellow flag for celebration of diversity.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are well supported in St Brogan’s College. The school has accessed the appropriate resources and available supports to aid the full inclusion of these students. These students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life. A multi-pronged approach assists in providing supports for these students. The school identifies and provides for the educational needs of the target students. As a participant in DEIS, the school benefits from the SCP which operates in the school to support students at risk of early school leaving. The work of the in-school SCP personnel is a very significant element of the support provided to the target students. Links with the local SCP cluster are maintained by the school completion co-ordinator and the project worker. Liaison with the SCP personnel in the local primary school is also maintained by the project worker and in this way an understanding of students is developed in advance of their entry into St Brogan’s College. In-school supports include the breakfast club and the after-school homework club. Outside school supports such as holiday programmes are also provided.

Other supports which are effective in promoting the inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds include a book-rental and needy-pupil-book scheme and the UCC+ Traveller Mentor scheme. The school also plans to implement *From the Fringes*, a social skills learning programme for first-year students.

Overall, the school has devised a systematic approach to the organisation and implementation of a range of strategies to support students with additional educational needs and it is evident that these are having very positive effects.
5.2 Guidance and student support in the whole-school context

The guidance allocation for St Brogan’s College is thirty-three hours per week. The school has two guidance counsellors, one of whom is full-time. Guidance planning was found to be well documented at both an individual and whole-school level. Building on the good level of planning that has taken place, it is recommended that the guidance-department plan should include short to medium-term plans that would be used in discussions with senior management when planning guidance provision for the subsequent year. Collaborative planning among various personnel including the HSCL co-ordinator, the special educational needs personnel and the care team should inform these discussions. This would assist in whole-school guidance planning. A detailed evaluation of Guidance in St Brogan’s College is contained in the guidance inspection report which accompanies this whole-school-evaluation report.

The informal communication among teachers, management and students that was observed along the corridors of St Brogan’s College provides evidence that students’ welfare is at the heart of daily life in the school. It is supported by a well-developed care structure, to which there are many strands. Documentary evidence provided by school management indicates that class tutors play a key role in encouraging students and these are supported by year heads. Class tutors have a significant role in dovetailing the pastoral and positive behavioural support for students. Senior management views the “year-head role as essential in the management of students”. The role of the year heads is that of caring for students in the first instance, monitoring their progress, their attendance, and ultimately their behaviour. In some instances, year heads continue to work with their year group as they progress through the school. This practice facilitates the enhancement of their knowledge and understanding of the students in their care.

The care structure is strongly supported by senior management, the HSCL co-ordinator, the guidance department and the school completion staff. A care team, which comprises the previously named personnel in addition to a full-time teacher of the special educational needs department, meets on very regular basis to identify and discuss students who are at risk and to put plans in place for the support of these students. This is very good practice as it ensures that the various supports are co-ordinated in addition to facilitating the exchange of information among the care personnel.

An effective transition programme which supports students in their transfer from primary school to post-primary school operates in St Brogan’s College. This includes visits by school personnel to the feeder primary schools in advance of entry of the students, an open night, a one-day induction programme in September for first-year students and meetings for their parents in September. An important element of support for first-year students is the ‘Big Brother Big Sister’ initiative, which is a lunchtime peer-mentoring programme and is based on friendship and mentoring. Both first-year and Transition-year students undergo training to ensure the successful implementation of this programme.

The weekly class-tutor period and the intermittent year-group assemblies provide a forum for student encouragement and the acknowledgement of student progress. To standardise the work that takes place during these sessions, it is recommended that a whole-school pastoral programme be devised and that specific aspects of personal development are outlined for each year group. This programme would be delivered by the class tutors.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a central element of student support and is recognised as contributing to students’ personal and social development. SPHE is appropriately timetabled in junior cycle. Lesson themes as outlined in the planning documentation are consistent with syllabus guidelines. The inclusion of a module of SPHE in the TY curriculum is very good practice. An RSE policy was developed in 2003 and an
SPHE policy was devised in 2005. Cognisance should be taken of the Department’s policy templates, available at www.education.ie, during any future review of these policies.

The HSCL co-ordinator provides a link between the school, community and home. Documentary evidence indicates that the co-ordinator attends a range of student-support and curricular team meetings and various cluster meetings. This is good practice as it facilitates the building of links with the other schools in the cluster and the exchange of information, including the sharing of best practice with other co-ordinators. The school plan indicates that the HSCL co-ordinator has been involved in organising a range of parental support programmes. Building on this good practice, the HSCL co-ordinator could devise a programme that would further develop parents’ awareness of their own capacities to enhance their children’s educational progress. Such a programme could help the school address some of the factors that influence the participation of students in the learning process. For example, a brochure to provide guidelines to parents on strategies that would support their children in their learning might be a first step.

The school attaches high value to acknowledging students’ successes and much effort is invested in doing so. Celebration of students’ achievements is carried out by means of annual awards night, the graduation ceremonies, JCSP celebration nights, the LCA students’ noticeboard and through the regular year-group assemblies. These are all most worthwhile.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to caring for the needs and best interests of its students. Care of students is perceived by all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, as a whole-school responsibility both inside and outside the classroom. Given the myriad care structures in place and the differing roles of key personnel, the school should consider including a description or a mind map of the care structure of St Brogan’s College in the student journal as a means of ensuring students are well informed of the services available to them.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- The translation of the mission statement into the daily interactions within the life of the school is evidenced by the effective pastoral care structures.
- The school practises as a truly inclusive school.
- Communication mechanisms among the trustees, the board of management and in-school management are very good.
- The principal and deputy principal have a good working relationship; their complementary skills facilitate the effective management and organisation of St Brogan’s College.
- Staff members are facilitated in the development of their leadership capacities through opportunities to take responsibility for the management of significant aspects of school activity.
- Parents are actively engaged in the school through the parents’ association and other activities.
- The empowerment of students through the student council has a long tradition in the school.
- The enhancement of the physical infrastructure of the school to meet the needs has been, and continues to be, a priority for the school.
• St Brogan’s College has participated in the process of school development planning (SDP) for a considerable length of time. Ongoing priorities for planning have been established and very good work has been done on the recently revised school plan.
• Team teaching, particularly in junior cycle where teachers share the instruction role, was observed to be very good.

As a means of building on these strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

• To enhance the links between the board of management and Kinsale College of Further Education, it is recommended that a staff member from Kinsale Further Education College be co-opted to the board.
• The board should ensure that all legally required policies are formally ratified.
• It is recommended that the principal visit the Kinsale College of Further Education and meet the staff periodically.
• It is recommended that the school introduce additional strategies that would further improve attendance levels, particularly in Transition Year.
• The full guidance allocation should be used in a proportionate way to provide for the students in both Kinsale College of Further Education and in St Brogan’s College.
• All teachers should be timetabled at least for the minimum number of hours each week as stipulated in the relevant circular letters.
• Physical Education lessons should be provided for all students.
• It is recommended that the school pursue the acquisition of alternative accommodation that would address the problem with regard to space in the delivery of learning support and resource teaching to students.
• A copy of the updated school plan should be available in the staffroom, board members should be provided with an electronic copy of the plan and the permanent section of the plan should be uploaded onto the school’s website.
• Guidance should be timetabled for one period each week in both year one and year two of LCA.
• Only diaries relating to work experience completed while students are taking the LCVP programme should be used as elements of their LCVP work.
• It is recommended that a smaller core teaching team be put in place for the teaching of students with special educational needs.

7. RELATED SUBJECT INSPECTION REPORTS

The following related Subject Inspection reports are available:
• Subject Inspection of Science and Chemistry – 1 December 2009
• Subject Inspection of Material Technology Wood and Construction Studies – 19 January 2010
• Subject Inspection of Guidance – 20 January 2010
• Subject Inspection of Mathematics – 19 January 2010
• Subject Inspection of Geography – 26 January 2010

Published, March 2011
Appendix

School Response to the Report

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection

The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the very positive nature of the W.S.E Report.

The Board is pleased to note the confirmation of the effective management and organisation of St. Brogan’s College.

The Board also expresses satisfaction that the school practices as a truly inclusive school and that the active engagement of parents and the empowerment of students is recognised in the report.

The Board is pleased that the commitment and dedication of the staff is acknowledged for the organisation of the extensive range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

The Board is pleased to acknowledge the congratulations extended in the report to management and staff on the “provision of such educational experiences that assist in the holistic development of the students in their care.”

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 determined that the key recommendations will be implemented as far as possible and is satisfied that many of the recommendations in the report have already been put in place.